Seed Flings

Overview

Students will learn about native plants and why they are good for the environment and create their own native seed fling.

Background

1. What is a weed?
    a. It is a plant where it is not wanted
        i. Example-
            1. Tomato in the garden- plant
            2. Dandelion in the garden- weed
            3. Flower in the lawn- weed
            4. Grass in the lawn- plant
            5. Tomato in the lawn- weed
        ii. Anything can be a weed if it is where it is not wanted.
2. What are native plants?
    a. They are plants that have developed over thousands of years in a particular place/region.
    b. They were there before human settlements
3. Why are native plants important?
    a. They provide habitat and food for wildlife
        i. People, Birds, pollinators (bees, butterflies, insects), and mammals all use native plants
    b. They help hold water while it **infiltrates** into the soil
        i. Infiltration is the process in which surface water (rain) enters into the soil.
        ii. During a large rain event this helps reduce runoff
        iii. Runoff water carries sediment (soil) and other solids/liquids downstream which can have a negative impact on water quality.
    c. Their roots systems help create healthy soil by creating space so that air and water can move.
4. What are invasive plants?
    a. They are plants that do not occur naturally
        i. They are distributed through birds, wind, and humans (picking flowers, ornamental plants, vehicles)
    b. Why are invasive plants bad for the environmental?
        i. They crowd out native plants that are good for the environment.
        ii. They compete with native plants for water, light, and nutrients.
    c. Why are they so successful?
        i. They have adapted to spread fast using aggressive root systems, large quantities of seeds, and have adapted to poor growing conditions.
    d. What is the impact of invasive species?
        i. They contribute to the decline of endangered and threatened species.

ii. Plant diversity can be decreased
iii. They contribute to the degradation of wildlife habitat
iv. Results in poor quality of agricultural lands

5. What are naturalized plants?
    a. Naturalized plants that are not native, but the coexist without negatively affecting the native plants.
6. How are seeds spread?
    a. Wind- example would be dandelions that use wind to blow them across a field
    b. Water- some seeds drop into water and are carried away to other places
    c. Ingestion- animals consume the seeds and then the seeds are excreted in the droppings (raccoons, deer, birds, etc.)
    d. "explosions"- some plants have seed pods that crack open when they are ripe and dry (peas)
    e. Physical force- some seeds are carried by animals on their fur or when humans pick flowers and take them somewhere else. Example would be burrs

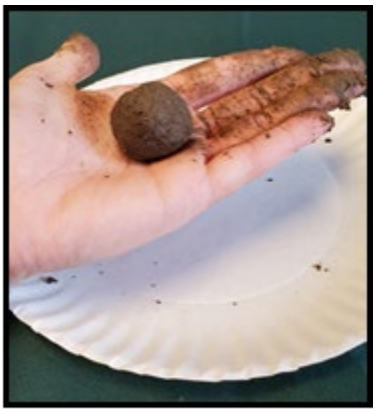
Supplies

- Seed mix
- Soil
- Biodegradable bags
- String
- Paper Plate
- Student Worksheet (master copy included)

Directions

1. Take an appropriate amount of soil for group and dump into bin
2. Add water until it forms a dough like consistency- should be moist enough to stick together into a ball, but not runny

3. Roll soil into a ball



4. Make an indent in the ball

5. Add a small pinch of seeds in indent

6. Fold over sides of indent to cover seeds

7. Reform ball
8. Place seed ball into bag
9. Tie bag shut

10. Fling, or simply place, bag in a garden where it will not be mowed over
11. Watch them grow!
12. They may use the included worksheet to guide themselves through a research project on a native species from the list of plant species.

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Student Worksheet

1. What is the scientific name?

2. What is the common name?

3. Where does this plant grow?

4. How much water does this plant need?

5. How much sunlight does this plant need?

6. How big does this plant get?

7. How does it reproduce?

8. Is the plant invasive or native to this county?

9. Draw a picture of the plant and label each part.

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