

SPROUTING HYPOTHESEEDS

Note: The following research idea has not been fully developed into an activity but has been tried in some workshops and classrooms. If you try it, let us know how it went by sending a note to epp@mhub.facstaff.wisc.edu.

"Why can't science be more fun like the easy subjects?" (G. Lake 1994)
"Science is pretty much taught as an assembly of facts." (D. Denton)

INTRODUCTION

Science is much more than a collection of definitions and facts. It is a process; a way of thinking about the world and how it works; a set of problems to be solved. Science can be great fun when students become engaged in the excitement of scientific discovery.

How does this relate to the prairie restoration at your school? Let's face it --- restoration itself is really a big scientific experiment. Restorations at school sites provide convenient outdoor laboratories where students can observe, ask questions, and conduct experiments.

To involve students in the process of science, teachers must "be more like coaches than autocrats" (D. Denton 1995) and must be prepared to guide students' creative thinking. In this activity students are asked to delve into the scientific process by developing a question and designing an experiment to answer the question.

ACTIVITY

Group students into teams. Their task is to come up with one question about SEEDS, and an experiment to answer the question. Use prairie seeds to generate ideas. There are no constraints, except that the experiment should be one that could be carried out in a school setting. Encourage the students to be creative, inquisitive, and have fun.

DISCUSSION

What process did the groups use to come up with a question? Did observation/discussion/prior knowledge play important parts? What factors were considered in designing the experiment?