

Ethnobotany: From The Field to The Backpack

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Abstract

This paper presents a teaching proposal for studying ethnobotany in secondary education by examining plant materials and transforming them into useful objects. The proposal integrates botanical knowledge, traditional plant uses, cultural heritage, and practical activities. Students select plant materials, observe their characteristics, identify the corresponding species, and investigate their documented ethnobotanical uses. They then relate the properties of each material to its potential function. The proposed products include a handmade herbarium notebook, bookmarks containing pressed leaves, envelopes for storing seeds, and pencil cases or notebook covers made from natural fabrics and decorated with plant dyes and botanical printing. Each product is accompanied by an information sheet documenting the botanical identification, the plant part used, its characteristics, the ethnobotanical use investigated, and the production procedure. The completed products and information sheets are assembled in an ethnobotanical backpack as the final outcome of the activity. The activity is intended to develop skills in plant identification, relating material properties to their functions, consulting botanical and ethnobotanical sources, and applying different production techniques. It can be adapted to different educational levels and learning contexts by varying the materials selected and the products created. Its interdisciplinary approach connects science, culture, and everyday life, enabling students to understand plant diversity, the properties of plant materials, and their practical applications.

Keywords: botanical education; cultural heritage; ethnobotany; secondary education; useful plants