

Activity 2. The Garden Web

Description

This game aims to deepen the understanding about how the diverse elements of a living ecosystem are interconnected. In this game each participant gets a card for a different organism or natural element and the group forms an ecosystem of a garden. During the activity the participants look for the other elements they depend on to be able to live and discover how all the participants in an ecosystem depend on each other. At least six people are needed to play this game, and it could be played with a large group as well.

The extension of this game is to introduce “disturbing” factors like pesticides, which with scissors cut the connection lines.

Teaser activity

Ask participants to sit on a bench in their closest park with papers and pen: they should list all the organisms they can observe. Once they have listed them, they should try to draw an organogram where the connection lines are different relations of the organisms.

Teaser-video:

<https://www.ourplanet.com/en/video/what-is-biodiversity/>

Photos/Images





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Competences addressed

Ecological competences:

- Awareness about biodiversity and ecosystems
- Awareness about human impact on biodiversity
- Knowledges about needs and benefits of plants and animals

Social and individual competences:

- Group work and communication
- collaboration

Learning objectives

- The participants identify the different organism in a garden
- The participants identify the different relations of organisms in an ecosystem
- The participants are getting familiar with holistic approaches of gardening
- The participants learn to identify needs and benefits of different organism

Group characteristics

Activity can be done in groups of 6 up to 30 participants.

Preparation for the activity

There is no need for special knowledge to do this activity.

Material needed:

- as many cards as participants
- As many pens as participants
- A ball of string
- optional: a flipchart, scissors

Place needed:

- natural space / Garden
- Big enough that people can make a circle



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The activity / the content

- 1) Go in a garden or in a specific natural place with your group
- 2) ask them to observe their surroundings and ask them to list the different organisms /elements they observe or they presume are present in the garden. At this phase moderator can write all the elements mentioned by participants on the cards and also gather the observations on a flipchart.
- 3) Gather the cards and put them in a box. Everybody picks a card.
- 4) The person leading the game should explain that the group now represents an ecosystem – a community of living things. Everyone should go around the circle and read out their plant or animal. The person leading the game should make sure that everyone knows what the plants and animals are.
- 5) The person leading the game should give someone the ball of string.
- 6) The person with the ball of string should look around the circle and find something they think they're connected to, for example, something they'd eat (or be eaten by!) or a place they'd live.
- 7) The player with the string should hold onto the end of the string, throw the rest of the ball of string to the player they're connected to and so on. Everyone should continue making connections and throwing the ball of string around until everyone is connected at least once.
- 8) When everybody is connected at least once everyone should talk about their different connections and what kind of connections it is (alimentation, fertilisation etc.).
- 9) The person leading the game can then introduce “disturbing factors” like a specific pesticide or cutting a tree.
- 10) The group should then decide what effects on these strings the disturbing factor is inducing. Eventually they should cut the connection with scissors.
- 11) Everyone should say how cutting one or two strings affects him/her or other parts of the web. Encourage everyone to think about the domino effect on other species. How will removing one plant or animal end up affecting the whole ecosystem?
- 12) The person leading the game should help everyone understand that this shows why all sorts of life is really important. This variety of life is called biodiversity
- 13) The person leading the game should explain that humans are part of this web of life – we need biodiversity to survive.



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Questions for reflection, self-assessment and conclusions

- Which organisms are missing and could be beneficial for this garden ?
- Which organisms are in danger?
- Are there “useless” organisms?

Recommendations on how to adapt to different target groups

- If people have difficulties with language, they can also draw on the card
- If people are shy or demotivated you can also start with an ice-breaker game with the ball of string

References

https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Permaculture/Permaculture_Facilitators_Resource_Book-Training_Assessment.pdf

<https://www.amnh.org/explore/ology/biodiversity/web-of-life/activity-instructions>