

PRYING INTO PLANTS

While at the NC Zoo, students use observation skills to analyze the many different features of plants.

Grade Level
3-8

Theme:
Adaptations
Biodiversity
Ecosystems

Curriculum Connections:
S, SS, A

Zoo Location:
Sonora Desert

Forest Aviary

Native Woodlands

Through close observations at the NC Zoo, you can learn a lot about the many varieties of plants that grow in different ecosystems. Look for the plant characteristics listed below as you visit the Sonora Desert, RJ Reynolds Forest Aviary, and the forest trails throughout the Zoo. As you find examples, place a check in the appropriate ecosystem in which it was found. Complete the **Back at School** section after your Zoo visit.

Characteristic	Desert	Native Woodland	Aviary
Plant With Thorns (covering most of plant)			
Plant with Waxy Coating on Leaves/Stem			
Plant with Roots Above Ground			
Plant with Rough, Thick Bark			
Plant with Needle-like Leaves			
Plant with "Fuzz" or Hair			
Plant with Flowers			
Plant with Very Large Leaves			
Plant with Nuts, Seeds, Fruits, or Berries			
Plant Growing in Dry, Sandy Soil			
Plant with a Fragrant Smell			
Plant that Holds Water			
Plant Growing on Another Plant			
Plant with Very Small Leaves			
Plant that Serves as an Animal Home			
Plant with Smooth, Thin Bark			
Plant with Leaves that Aren't Green			
Plant that Grows in Shade			
Plant that is Being Used by an Animal			

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Back at School...

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With your completed Prying into Plants worksheet, find a partner and discuss the first question listed below. After you've answered that question using facts gathered during your Zoo trip, find another partner and repeat the process until you've discussed all the questions listed (finding a new partner for each question). Finally, complete the **On Your Own Activity** and share your product with your classmates.

Partner Discussion Questions:

- 1) Looking over your observation notes, what are some characteristics that most plants have in common?
- 2) What plant did you find most interesting and why?
- 3) Why might plants have different shaped leaves? What purpose do you think leaves serve?
- 4) Why do you think bark is important to plants? What might happen if a tree had no bark? Do you own anything that is a lot like bark?
- 5) Did you see any animals using plants or plant materials during your visit.? Make a list of the ways humans and other animals use plants.
- 6) What do you think plants need for survival? List things that might be affected if plants are destroyed or not protected.

On Your Own:

Design a 'newly discovered' plant species with as many features as you would like. Determine the type of environment in which your plant will live (warm, cold, wet, dry). Create a list of the features your plant possesses and why each was chosen. Invent a name for your new discovery.

On a blank piece of paper, sketch a picture of your new plant species.