

Weeds and Wildflowers



PURPOSE

To get Cadets involved in discovering God's creation, specifically their local plant life, and to help them understand that how we differentiate between weeds and flowers is very relative and arbitrary.

INTRODUCTION

This merit badge can be earned in combination with the Photography merit badge, though it is not required. This badge refers to flowering plants, flowering reeds and grasses, and cacti. It is not meant to include trees, bushes, or shrubs.

LEARNING

1. A wildflower is generally meant to include flowering plants that are found mostly in uncultivated areas or have grown without intentional planting by man. Some grasses have a flower or seed head, but won't look like what we normally think of as a flower with petals. A cattail is one example.

2. A weed is generally any plant that has no significant use to man in the place where it is growing. It is important to note that many weeds are considered wildflowers and many weeds are actually edible and some even have traditional or historical medicinal qualities. One man's weed is another's wildflower and vice versa.

Note to the boys, however, that unwanted weeds were not a part of God's original creation. It was not until Adam and Eve sinned that God cursed the ground with weeds (Genesis 3:17–18).

3. General categories:

a. *Native* — A species of plant that is growing in an area without the direct introduction by man — or there is no written or oral history that indicates the same — is considered native. Plants found in North America before European settlement are considered to be native.

b. *Introduced or Non-Native* — A species of plant that is known to have been brought from another geographic location either intentionally or not, is considered non-native. If it comes from another continent, it is considered to be exotic. If it's from a different area of the same continent, it is simply considered translocated.

c. *Naturalized* — This is the designation for an introduced or non-native plant that does not need human help to reproduce and maintain itself over time in an area where it is not native. Naturalized plants do not become native members of the local plant community. Many naturalized plants are found primarily near human-dominated areas.

d. *Invasive* — A plant that is both non-native and able to establish on many sites, grow quickly, and spread to the point of disrupting plant communities or ecosystems.

4. Foreign plants and seeds can come on ships by attaching to the hull and being dislodged at a port or in a waterway. They can also come inside ships by becoming attached to cargo or even mixed with food or seed grains. They can be attached to clothing, hair, skin, or fur. They can come aboard aircraft in much the same way. They can be spread by migrating birds and animals. People sometimes smuggle foreign plant life into an area without realizing the impact of their activities.

5. The Cadet may very well be able to find much or all of what he needs in his own back yard. We are not asking them to find anything exotic or rare. We simply want him to become acquainted with local plant life and to think in terms of weed or wildflower. Remember, these specimens may include flowering reeds and grasses.

6. The answer to this will vary depending on what the boy selected. Ask him to show you his source material for the answers.

7. This will vary by region. It should be simple to find the answer online. Ask the Cadet for his source.

8. Some different species may share the same common name. Also, some common names can vary from one part of the country to another or may vary from one country to another.

9. Quite a few weeds and wildflowers are actually considered noxious and/or prohibited in various areas. A weed is deemed noxious if it can directly or indirectly injure or cause damage to crops, livestock, poultry, or other interests of agriculture, irrigation, navigation, the public health, or the environment. If a weed is prohibited, it means that it is illegal to commercially sell or distribute it.

DOING

This section is self-explanatory.