

Chapter 6: Plants

Seaweeds

Ratings

MESS  DANGER  DIFFICULTY 

Theme

Identification; discernment

Equipment needed

Seaweed identification guide (easy to source online); seaweeds (make sure you know what they are); buckets of sea water to keep the seaweeds fresh between collection and your session; newspapers; plastic sheets; hand gel; labels; pens; pins; small prizes (optional); edible seaweed (optional)

Before you begin

You will need to be able to identify seaweeds, even if it's just the brown bladderwracks or spiral wracks. You may want to get some green ones if you are feeling adventurous. Reds are annoying and bleach to look green or brown, so be careful. There may also be local rules about how much seaweed you can collect; some countries require a licence to do so. Work hard to remove any little creatures who inhabit the seaweeds: serrated wrack is loved by tiny flat periwinkles (who come in different colours) and little crabs too. So be gentle.

Experimental method

Pre-sort the seaweeds into each bucket so that they are easy to pull out for each session. Lay out plastic sheets and place newspaper on top (to soak up water and reduce mess when tidying away). Lay out a few strands of each type on to the newspaper (see photos online).

Challenge people to guess the names of the seaweeds. Get the people to place the name labels on the seaweeds. Extra challenge: can you name where on the shore they come from? If you would like, give out small prizes for those who guess correctly!

You could also bring in some edible seaweed for the adventurous ones in your group.

Big thinking

Each seaweed has a range of adaptations which allow it to exist at particular places on the shore, like slime, curling or bladders. Identifying them requires a degree of judgement or discernment, and relies on matching general features with more particular ones.

Big questions

You could think about discernment (see Matthew 16:1–3, Luke 12:54–56). How do we judge whether someone is a good person to be friends with or not? How do we know we are right? What happens if we are wrong? What about larger situations? How do we know if the decisions we have made are right or not? We find some things easy to identify, so why is it so hard to get it right with people or situations? Can seaweeds change their abilities to live where they are? What would you change about yourself? Why does the Bible talk about being a Christian as a new creation?