FINDING OUT ABOUT HERBS IN LATIN AMERICA

Level: middle or high school, grades 7-12
Course: science, social studies

Rationale

In our modern technological society, health care has become a big issue. The rising costs of adequate health care is making it impossible or nearly impossible for many people to receive medical treatment for illnesses. Those who can afford good medical attention are paying huge premiums and may eventually reach a point where they too will no longer be able to afford medical care. How has the current situation arrived at this point? Why has this situation never been such a huge problem in the past? Of course, there are many reasons for this dilemma and no easy answer is in sight. Nevertheless, one possible solution may be found by studying the use of medicinal herbs in Latin America. Plants have been used for their medicinal values in Latin America for thousands of years. The herbal plants in the rain forests of Latin America, for example, hold the secret to thousands of remedies that are yet to be discovered. By studying the uses of herbal plants of the past and present in Latin America we may develop keen insights into how civilizations have flourished in the past. Furthermore, we can learn how modern day uses of herbs are helping to sustain societies today where western medicine is not easily available.

Lesson Overview

This project can be divided into 5 parts.
Part one
General study of herbal plants; plant structures and functions from a scientific point of view.

Part two
Study of plant growth in different environments.

Part three
Historical and cultural uses of herbs in New Mexico.

Part four
Geographical study of herbs throughout Latin America and herbs that come from the Rain forests.

Part five
Cultural uses of herbs in Latin America

Time needed
Approximately 5 weeks; one week for each part

Materials

Readings (see each individual lesson)

Bibliography


Martin y cia. Ltda. *Que Es la Yerba Mate? Rosario, Impresion de E. Fenner*, 1942.


Osado, Ricardo. *1770 Medicina Domestica, y Descripcion de Los Nombres y Virtudes de Las Llervas Indigenas de Yucatan y Las Enfermedades a Que Se Aplican*. Typewritten manuscript.


