

Lake Mead

Environmental Education

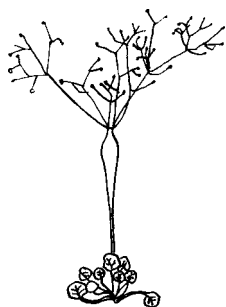
National Recreation Area
National Park Service



CLASSROOM PROGRAM

Grade 4 - "Keyed into Plants"

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| Theme | By applying specific characteristics to a plant key, one can easily identify plants of the Mojave Desert. |
| Objectives | Students will identify the three basic parts of a plant. Students will identify at least one characteristic or adaptation of a Mojave Desert plant. Students will observe, examine, compare, and identify several plants native to the Mojave Desert. Students will "key-out" a variety of desert plant specimens using a simple plant key. |
| Vocabulary | <u>adaptation</u> - a physical or behavioral feature of an animal or plant that helps it survive in its environment <u>botany</u> - the science of the study of plants <u>cactus</u> - a plant with fleshy stems and branches and with scales or spines instead of leaves <u>plant key</u> - a series of characteristics applied to a plant that leads to its identification <u>spine</u> - a modified leaf |
| Background Information | Lake Mead National Recreation Area is located in the Mojave Desert. The Mojave Desert is the hottest and driest of the North American Deserts, receiving an average yearly rainfall of four to six inches. The plants found in this arid region have specifically adapted to conditions of extreme heat, little or no rainfall, the drying effects of wind, and the intense sunlight. By comparing one's observations of any particular plant's characteristics to a plant key, one can identify nearly every plant species! A plant key is a tool arranged in a series of steps that helps reveal the possible identities of plants. The correct way to identify a plant is to observe and compare all of the plant's characteristics to those listed in a plant key's description or shown in a plant key's drawing. Basing identification on a single characteristic may lead you astray. At first glance the Mojave Desert may seem barren and lifeless. Don't be fooled! This desert supports a very rich and diverse variety of plant life just waiting to be discovered! |
| Before the Ranger Visits your Classroom | Have students draw at least two different plants that they find in the schoolyard. Compare characteristics such as size, color, and shape of leaves. |
| After the Ranger Visits your Classroom | Have students explore the schoolyard for at least one plant that shares a common characteristic or adaptation with a Mojave Desert plant. |



Teachers! - check out our new web site at <http://www.nps.gov/lame/classindex.htm>