



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.

by
Hugo A. Chacon
chacon@apsicc.aps.edu
West Mesa High School
6701 Fortuna Rd., NW
Albuquerque, NM 87121
505-831-6933

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

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