

Plant Fact Cards

Southwest Region



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Use these cards of regional plants with "Seed Travels," "Signs of Life," and other plant activities where suitable. Review these key plant words:

Sagebrush

Description: Shrub

Habitat: Desert

Seeds: Spread by wind

Animal Partners: Nesting site for birds and food for mule deer, rabbits, hares, and others

Cool Fact: Rain causes the leaves to release oils that have a very strong sweet odor.



Prickly Pear (or Opuntia)

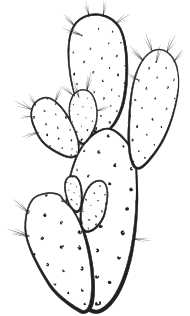
Description: A green cactus with lots of round, thick pads that have sharp spines

Habitat: Deserts, gardens, hot and dry cities

Seeds: Coyotes, cattle, and other animals eat the sweet fruit on the pads and drop the seeds.

Animal Partners: Tiny cochineal (COTCH-uh-neel) insects eat the juicy pads.

Cool Fact: The red fruit tastes like bubblegum and watermelon. People turn it into candy and jam.



Penstemon Flower

Description: A tall wildflower with a thick green or red stem and hot pink blossoms

Habitat: Desert, gardens

Seeds: Seeds fall to the ground. The ones not eaten grow close to the parent plant.

Animal Partner: Hummingbirds have a long "straw" that helps them drink the nectar at the bottom of the tube-shaped flowers.

Cool Fact: If you want to attract a hummingbird, wear bright red or pink. Those colors signal "food" to them.



Oneseed Juniper Tree

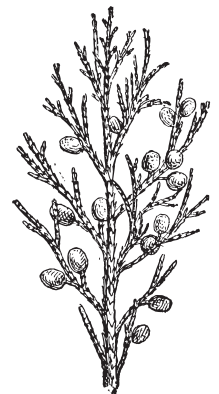
Description: The Oneseed's leaves look like tiny ropes and stay green all year.

Habitat: Deserts, canyons, rocky areas, gardens

Seeds: Blue cones with one berry-like seed. Birds eat and drop the seeds.

Animal Partners: Rabbits, hares, and other small animals find shade and shelter underneath.

Cool Fact: Some junipers grow slowly but live for about 800 to 1,000 years!



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Plant Fact Cards

Northeast Region

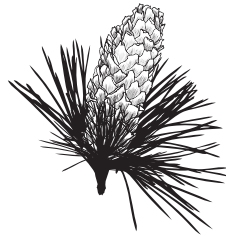


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Use these cards of regional plants with "Seed Travels," "Signs of Life," and other plant activities where suitable. Review these key plant words:

White Pine Tree

Description: The leaves are very thin needles that stay green all year.



Habitat: On hills and small mountains in areas that have winter

Seeds: The pine cones drop and roll or float away. Then they dry up, and the seeds fall out.

Animal Partners: Bald eagles nest in the branches. Songbirds, beavers, porcupines, deer, and hares eat the seeds.

Cool Fact: They can live up to 450 years!

Sugar Maple Tree

Description: A large tree packed with leaves that turn bright colors in the fall

Habitat: Forests, yards, and cities in areas that have winter

Seeds: Two-winged seed pods twirl and float away from the tree, like helicopters.

Animal Partners: Deer, moose, hares, flying squirrels, and caterpillars eat the leaves, seeds, and buds. Songbirds and woodpeckers nest in the branches.

Cool Fact: Forty cups of sap make one cup of syrup!



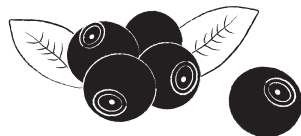
Highbush Blueberry

Description: A shrub with oval leaves, small white or pink flowers, and clumps of tiny blueberries

Habitat: Wet forests, swamps, bogs, low-lying areas, and bare hills

Seeds: Birds and other animals eat the berries and drop the seeds elsewhere.

Animal Partners: Bees eat and spread the pollen.



New England Aster

Description: A wildflower with purple or white blossoms that have an orange center. It can grow up to 6 feet tall!

Habitat: Clearings in forests, meadows, prairies, the banks of streams, gardens

Seeds: Wind spreads the seeds.

Animal Partners: Bees and butterflies drink the nectar. Bees eat and spread the pollen.



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Western Region



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Oak Trees

Description: The leaf with curves called lobes and acorns as seeds



Habitat: Forests from the mountains and hills to the coast, cities, and orchards

Seeds: Animals bury acorns for winter food. The nuts break open and sprout into trees after a forest fire.

Animal Partners: Holes in the trunk are shelters for many animals: bears, birds, squirrels, raccoons, and others.

Brittlebush

Description: A round shrub with small, silver leaves with tiny hairs and bright yellow flowers

Habitat: Dry, sunny areas and warm year areas

Seeds: Wind spreads the seeds, which have two hairy parts that help them float and drift.

Animal Partner: Desert tortoises use the shrub as a shelter.

Cool Fact: When they die and dry up, they become tumbleweeds—balls of dead sticks that roll across the desert.



Wild Buckwheat

Description: A small, round shrub with tiny silver leaves and white, yellow, orange, or red flowers



Habitat: Rocky, dry open areas, mountain slopes, gardens, cities

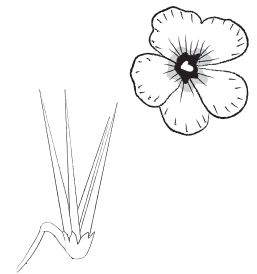
Seeds: The small, dry, brown fruits hold one seed. They fall and roll downhill.

Animal Partners: Bees, butterflies, and ants drink the nectar and spread the pollen.

Cool Fact: The seeds are cereal grains, like corn, oats, rice, and wheat.

Texas Stork's Bill

Description: A short flower with a few dark green, oval leaves and many bright red or purple blossoms



Habitat: Desert

Seeds: On dry days, the seed pod's spines coil up. On wet days, they straighten. This “spring” motion pops the pod away from the plant and buries the seed. Seed pods look like the head of a stork.

Animal Partner: Small bees and flies drink the nectar and spread the pollen.



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Douglas Fir

Description: A giant tree with thick trunk and thin leaves (needles) that stay green all winter

Habitat: Forests in areas that have winter

Seeds: The cones hold the seeds. They drop and roll or float away from the tree. When they dry up, the seeds pop out.

Animal Partners: Bald eagles and other birds build nests in the trees. Red tree voles (a cousin to mice) live their whole life in the tree, eating needles.



Vine Maple Tree

Description: A small tree with several trunks and leaves that turn bright colors in fall

Habitat: Forests, canyons, gardens

Seeds: Seed pods with two wings twirl and float away from the tree, like helicopters.

Animal Partners: Songbirds, game birds, and other animals eat the seeds, buds, and flowers. Deer and elk eat the leaves and bark.

Cool Fact: They often live on dark forest floors. There, they send up winding branches, like vines, seeking light.



Oregon Grape

Description: A shrub with groups of small, yellow flowers and leaves that stay dark green all year

Habitat: Dry, open mountain slopes or forests, gardens, cities

Seeds: Ducks, grouse and other birds eat and drop the blue berries, which look like grapes but aren't.

Animal Partner: Bees and butterflies drink the nectar and spread the pollen. Birds use the twigs to build nests.



Lupine

Description: A wildflower with a tall column of purple or white flowers

Habitat: Lupines can live almost anywhere but grow best in wet or moist areas

Seeds: Seed pods break open and toss the seeds out with force.

Animal Partners: Bees are the main animals that spread the pollen. Bears, gophers, and other mammals eat the roots.

Cool Fact: As "pioneer plants," they are often the first plants to grow after a fire or a volcanic blast.



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Midwest Region



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Common Milkweed

Description: A wildflower with big, thick, oval leaves and many tiny pink flowers shaped into balls



Habitat: Prairies, fields, the edge of forests, sand dunes, vacant lots, near railroad tracks and roads

Seeds: Big, long seed pods break open in fall. Each seed has a fluffy "parachute" that helps it ride on the wind.

Animal Partners: Butterflies, bees, moths, flies, and other animals drink the nectar.

Tree of Heaven

Description: A tree with a soft trunk that splits into three branches. The rows of leaves are up to 4 feet long.



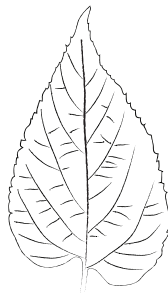
Habitat: From China but grows and spreads very fast almost anywhere

Seeds: The up to 325,000 seed pods per tree have wings that help them twirl and float on the wind.

Animal Partner: People plant it where soil or air is bad in cities, near burned areas or factories.

Hackberry Tree

Description: The big, rounded crown (top) is as wide as the tree is tall. It is a cousin to elm trees.



Habitat: Wide range of forests, river banks, cities

Seeds: Wind spreads the pollen and animals spread the seeds.

Animal Partner: Birds that stay north in the winter eat the tiny, purple fruits. Each fruit has a pit, a single seed.

Cool Fact: The trees create shade, stand up to strong wind, don't mind pollution (dirty air), and live 150 or so years.

Chicory

Description: The jagged leaves look like dandelions (a cousin). The stem is stiff like wood, and the flowers are blue.

Habitat: Near roads and in sidewalk cracks, empty lots, garbage dumps, and open fields

Seeds: Spread by wind

Animal Partner: People eat the leaves and grind up the long root to add to coffee.

Cool Fact: Only a few flowers open at a time, and they only last one day.



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Purple Passion Vine

Description: A vine that grows up fences, trees, and other objects. The big, purple flowers have a lot of fancy parts.



Habitat: Sunny, open fields and clearings in forests, gardens, cities

Seeds: Animals eat the tangy yellow fruits and drop the seeds elsewhere.

Animal Partner: Butterflies drink the nectar and eat and spread the pollen. Their caterpillars eat the poison leaves and live!

Strangler Fig

Description: The seeds sprout on the branches of other trees and grow roots to the ground. They eventually and kill the host tree.

Habitat: Swamps, hammocks (groups of trees), and cities that are warm all year round

Seeds: Both flowers and seeds are inside the bright red, yellow, and brown fruits. Birds eat the fruit and drop seeds on other trees.

Animal Partner: Tiny wasps are born and grow up inside the fruit. Adult wasps carry the tree's pollen to other fig trees.



Wild Senna

Description: A wildflower with groups of tiny yellow flowers



Habitat: Widespread—roadsides, fields, gardens, forests, cities

Seeds: The seed pods explode, flinging hard, round seeds far away with force.

Animal Partner: Many caterpillars eat the leaves. Bumblebees carry the pollen to other Senna plants.

Cool Fact: Ants and ladybugs drink the nectar. They keep away other insects that would eat the leaves.

Spanish Needle

Description: A wildflower with small, white and yellow flowers

Habitat: Almost any type of soil and sun or shade

Seeds: The seeds look like very tiny pitchforks. The fork end sticks to animals, which carry them away.

Animal Partners: Bees and butterflies drink the nectar and carry pollen to other plants.

Cool Fact: The seeds bury themselves on wet nights. The three “fork” parts join and drill into soil.



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American Sycamore

Description: A very big tree with large leaves and crooked branches

Habitat: In swamps, near streams or rivers, and in cities

Seeds: The seeds are inside brown, fuzzy balls with long stalks. In fall, the balls break open and wind carries the seeds away.

Animal Partner: Raccoons, opossums, squirrels, wood ducks, great blue herons, and other animals live in the trees.



Japanese Barberry

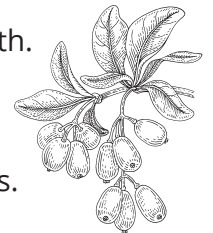
Description: A round shrub with thorns and tiny leaves

Habitat: Forests, roadsides, the banks of streams, fields, gardens, cities

Seeds: Birds and deer eat the tiny, red fruits and drop the seeds elsewhere, often in cities.

Animal Partner: Barberries grow well in loose soil with lots of nitrogen (a chemical). Earthworms provide both.

Cool Fact: Gardeners like them because deer don't eat the leaves. But, they drive out American plants.



Shield Lichen

Description: It's not a plant! It's a fungus (a cousin to mushrooms) that grows on tree bark or rocks. The color is silver.

Habitat: Mountains, coasts, and cities, where it stands up well to air pollution

Seeds: None!

Animal Partner: Green algae is not an animal or plant. It's a slimy group of very tiny living things that grow inside the lichen.



Staghorn Sumac

Description: A big shrub or small tree. The leaves turn bright red, orange, or yellow in fall. Tiny, dark red fruits clump into a triangle shape.

Habitat: Grows in groups in fields and near forests, roadsides, railroad tracks, fences, and streams

Seeds: Birds eat the fruits and drop the seeds elsewhere. The fruits last into late winter.

Animal Partners: Many birds nest in the branches. Deer and other animals use groups of sumac as shelter.



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