

Site Survey for Your Outdoor Classroom

Overall Site

What natural features can students explore? Are there hills, open areas for running games, forested areas, ditches where water might gather after a rainstorm?

Animals, Plants and Habitat

Trees are great for studying seasons and looking for wildlife. How many trees are in your schoolyard? _____

Where in the schoolyard can wildlife find food, water, shelter (the essential elements of habitat)?

What animals have you seen here? What animal signs might be left behind that will give us a clue to what might be visiting the schoolyard? Are there any nests, holes in the ground, chewed leaves, etc?

Logistics and Safety

Where is a good meeting spot for your class? (Think about shade, landmarks, etc.)

Do you notice any natural hazards? (Deep water, poison ivy, etc.)

Do you notice any manmade hazards? (Nearby busy street, broken glass, etc.)

What are some ways you can limit the exposure to any existing hazards?

Make a quick sketch of the schoolyard identifying important features for your outdoor classroom.

The following features and symbols can be included in your map. Other features could be included depending on your site.



Tree



Electrical Outlet



Hazards (man-made or natural)



Water – pond, puddle, hose, ditch



Sunny/open areas



Shaded areas



Meeting spot



Steep slope

Identifying poison ivy

- Does it have trifoliate leaves? (Leaves in groups of three) Look throughout the plant as ALL leaves should be trifoliate.
- Of the three leaves, is the one in the center slightly larger and with a longer petiole? (petiole is the small stem attaching leaf to main stem?)
- Is it growing as a vine either along the ground or vertically?
- Is the stem hairy?
- Are the leaves pointed and either smooth or lobed? (NEVER sharply serrated)
- Are the leaves the same color on both sides?

If you answered yes to all these questions, you may have poison ivy in your schoolyard. See the picture below for the identifying features.

Poison ivy



Harmless plants with similar features



Virginia Creeper - Yes, it is a vine but the leaves are usually in groups of five, not three.



Raspberry - yes it is a vine with three leaves but the edges are too serrated to be poison ivy. Also, the stem has thorns.



Strawberry - similarly to the raspberry, these leaves are too serrated to be poison ivy.