



Conception: The Rainforest Detective – a greenhouse tour

Location: Tropical Greenhouse, University of Kassel, Witzenhausen.

Target group: all middle school students (6th, 7th, 8th grade) - particularly bilingual schools

Learning objectives:

To gain knowledge and develop soft skills - learning facts about the rainforest, developing social competence, working in teams, changing perspectives, generating empathy and solidarity, provoking critical thinking and reflection, opening up possibilities to form and act upon individual decisions.

Learning content:

With the help of common tropical plants and the products that come from them this activity will illustrate the connections we have to countries and people in the southern hemisphere, by looking into our food habits in everyday life. Students will experience the climate and structure of tropical rainforests vividly and up close. “Under palm trees” they are encouraged to understand why it is important to care about how rainforests are treated, and recognize how their individual action can contribute to protecting the rainforest, for example by taking awareness of their private shopping behavior.

Using the example of cacao, students learn about the features of a rainforest plant in its warm, humid environment, and discover the trajectory of chocolate from the cacao tree until the chocolate product.

In addition, they will get the opportunity to find out about similarities and differences between the life of kids living in the rainforest, by comparing what they learn about them to their own everyday life.

Methods:

Teamwork at different hands-on “stations”, tour of the greenhouse, presentations of the groups, and discussions.

Materials:

Tropical plants, workbook, basket with product pictures, magnifying glasses, illustrative material, facts and information.

Short description:

First students work in teams on tropical topics alternating between 5 stations (“The tropical shopping basket”, “What is tropical rainforest?”, “What can I do to protect the rainforest?”, “Does chocolate grow on trees?”, “How about kids in the rainforest?”). Afterwards they present their results and have the opportunity to ask questions in a guided tour around all the stations. Discussion and practical demonstrations of aspects of a tropical climate and features of its typical plants are an integral part of the activity design.

Organization (duration/group size/ prize):

3 hours; maximum 25 students - 100 € (July 11)

Preparation: not necessary, basic introduction could be helpful

Follow-up work: not necessary but desirable

Related teaching subjects:

English - Biology - Geography - Ethics/Religion - Political and Economy sciences

Contact:

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