



Reed Weaving

Introduction

In the book *Jo MacDonald Saw a Pond*, author Mary Quattlebaum introduces children to the plants and creatures of a pond ecosystem. In this activity and its related connections, children learn about the importance of cattails to humans. Native Americans used cattails as building material for shelters and for food, medicine, toys and woven mats. Children will finger-weave their own mats.

Materials Needed

- ◆ Construction paper (one brown, one tan)
- ◆ Scissors

Procedure

1. Show how cattails were used by Native Americans by sharing the website **Native Tech: American Technology and Art** at www.nativetech.org/cattail/cattail.html. Native Americans used their fingers, rather than looms, to create the mats.
2. Distribute brown construction paper.
3. Ask students to fold brown paper horizontally and make a light pencil mark 1 inch from the top.
4. Have them cut from the fold up to the pencil mark and to repeat this at 1 inch intervals. (These cuts need not be straight; in fact, irregular cuts make more interesting patterns.)
5. Unfold brown paper and lay it straight on the table.
6. Have students cut the tan paper into 1-inch strips (or distribute pre-cut strips to students.)
7. Ask students to weave one end of tan strip first over the brown "thread" and then under the brown continuously.
8. Use another tan strip for the next row; alternate to weave under/over the brown "thread."

Key Concepts

- ◆ Plants are the base of an ecosystem.
- ◆ All organisms have different needs.
- ◆ Humans depend on environments.

For standards correlation please see our website.

Nature Connections

- ◆ Read aloud the description of cattails in the back of *Jo MacDonald Saw a Pond*. Cattails can provide food, shelter/nests, and resting or hiding places for pond creatures. Ask children to look at each picture to discover whether an animal is using it in one of those three ways.
- ◆ Purchase cattails from a florist or nursery and guide the children to observe them carefully (what is the color and shape), smell them, and touch them. Have the children hold and move the cattails. What sound do they make? Have each child take on the persona of the cattail and write a poem.

Additional Resources

Cattails in the Wetlands
<http://www.cattails.info/>

USDA Plant Database
<http://plants.usda.gov/>

The Edible Cattail
<http://www.sacredearth.com/ethnobotany/foraging/cattail.php>

Weaving with Cattails
<http://www.wickerwoman.com/articles/gathering-cattail-leaves>

