



DALLAS ARBORETUM
Education

Garden STEM at Home
Are Vacant Lots Vacant?



WE GROW MINDS, TOO.

ARE VACANT LOTS VACANT?



OBJECTIVE:

STUDENTS WILL DESCRIBE PLANTS AND ANIMALS THAT LIVE IN AN URBAN STUDY SITE - A VACANT LOT.

SOURCE

Project Learning Tree PreK-8 Activity Guide

BACKGROUND

Many children are surprised to learn that areas humans wouldn't call home are often perfectly suitable habitats for other living organisms.

A vacant lot, school garden or even a parking lot can provide an opportunity for kids to explore ecological relationships and habitats.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a study site that can safely be visited.
2. As a family, or in small groups, mark off a study area of 12 square feet using string or a tape measure. Alternate: use an item such as a hula hoop for younger learners.
3. Use the following rule for collecting scientific data: look, learn, leave alone. Instruct students to record observations of any living things in their study area.
4. Once they have collected drawings, photos or writing about each living thing, then instruct them to focus on indirect evidence of living things, such as tracks, feathers or seed pods.
5. Students may also provide a list of the abiotic/non-living elements found in their study zone.
6. Regroup to share out findings and to discuss the following questions: (1) Is your study zone a habitat? What is your evidence? (2) What indirect evidence did you find? (3) Could you construct a food chain based on your findings? (4) Is there any evidence of human impact on this environment? (5) What biotic/abiotic (living/nonliving) elements interact in your plot?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Explore the Are Vacant Lots Vacant? Additional Resources Guide from PLT:
<https://www.plt.org/blog/activity/prek-8-activity-47-vacant-lots-vacant/>

The Empty Lot by Dale Fife; ISBN: 0871568594.

The City Kid's Field Guide by Ethan Herberman; ISBN: 0671677462.

Wild Ones, Observing City Critters by Carol Malnor; ISBN: 978-1584695547