

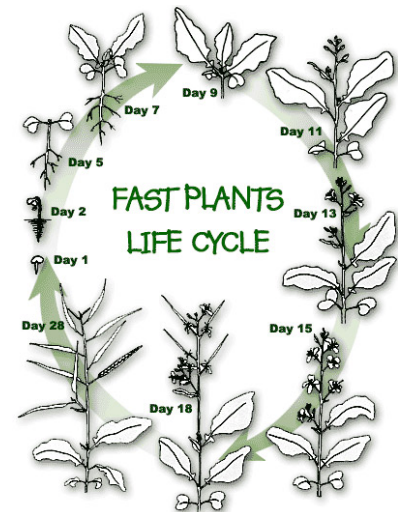
Woodland Elementary Learns About Plant Life Cycles

By Diana Maculan, 3rd Grade

Every year, third graders at Woodland Elementary have the opportunity to learn about Plant Life Cycles as part of the Life Cycles unit in our science curriculum. My class has always enjoyed this unit. At the same time that the students are learning about the various stages of plant growth and the job of the different plant parts, they also grow their own plants in the classroom, through the Wisconsin Fast Plants program. Visit their website at <http://www.fastplants.org> for more information.

In our unit, we begin by discussing why plants are so important to us and where they come from. Our focus quickly shifts to the life cycle stages of plants, and we start by exploring various types of seeds. One fun activity is soaking a lima bean and then splitting it open to study the "little plant inside". This helps us to understand where the plant parts of body, leaves, etc. come from. We also compare various flower and vegetable seeds, for color, size, shape, texture, etc.

Now we are ready to plant our own seeds. The Wisconsin Fast Plants program makes available seeds that can germinate, develop, and go to seed (pod form) all within 28 days. It is a great way to study the cycle in a timely fashion. The plants are part of the rapid cycling Brassica family. Students in class observe the growth and development of their plants, on a regular basis, by keeping a plant journal for written entries and pictures.



Everyone enjoys looking for the initial sprouting, development of leaves, and of course, flower buds. Once flowers develop, we use freeze-dried bees to simulate the pollination process in nature. Seedpods form a few days later and the students are able to take home the seeds and begin the plant life cycle once again.

Here are pictures of students and their plants.



*Plants are sprouting and developing, during Days 4-8.
Students use magnifying lenses to get a really close look.*

*These plants have really grown nicely.
By Day 13-18 they have plenty of flowers.*



Pollination takes place, by hand, as the students use freeze-dried bees and rub them against the stamen and onto the pistil. Seedpods should form soon.

