

# Connecting to Native Plants to Nature

a questionnaire

You are most likely reading this because, like us, you feel drawn to native plants! When we see a Fritillary butterfly sipping nectar from a patch of Milkweed, we can undoubtedly know that our forefathers watched this same sight time and time again. As in years before,

native plants are still one of mankind's strongest links to nature. In a world of digital screens, cities, and hustle, it can be easy to feel distanced to this connection and to not know the answers to questions about nature that our ancestors knew like the back of their hand. Today, we share with you a questionnaire that invites you to dig deeper into your relationship with the natural world and to reflect on things that are easily overlooked in our busy lives. Growing native plants is about growing this connection with nature, welcoming plants back onto the land where they belong and watching the wildlife thrive. It's not just about having a part of nature on our land, but *being* a part of nature in a world where plants, animals, and humans live together in harmony. We hope you will enjoy and find meaning from this test the way we did. Enjoy!

Some twenty-odd years ago, the Wilderness Awareness School in Duvall, WA developed a version of this test, called the Tourist Test, as a slideshow presentation for high school students. Since then, it has undergone many revisions and been used for many purposes. The test you are about to take is a version of one specific Tourist Test created by former WAS student Connor Stedman, and further modified by the Little Bluestem Collective and Hummingbird Hill Native Plant Nursery.

For a full experience, we strongly recommend using a pen and paper and answering in short, succinct phrases or one-word answers. If this is not convenient for you, it can also be completed in your head. If you're not sure of an answer, make a quick guess or skip it and move on to the next question. It's very important that all answers to these questions are based on the natural world, the wild plants and wildlife you've seen (as opposed to garden plants). Please don't use any outside resources in completing this exercise. Honesty is the only policy here. The point is not to prove anything, but to discover what you do and do not know, what you are and are not aware of in your surroundings, and maybe to learn a little about yourself and how you relate to the natural world in the process. Regardless of whether you feel you were able to answer many of the questions or not, take time to reflect upon this experience once you have finished. Above all, have fun!

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Your name:

Today's date:

Lunar phase:

Brief description of current weather conditions:

Which compass direction are you facing right now?

1. If you were to walk out your front door, list three wild unplanted natives you would see:

2. Describe the landscape out your front door 20 years ago, 100 years ago, and 1,000 years ago:

3. What is the nearest watercourse? Where are its headwaters, and which body of water does it empty into?

4. List five invasive (non-native) plants you are most likely to see in your area?

5. Name two species of wildlife in this area that have been extirpated or driven to extinction in the past 200 years.

6. Name two of the first wildflowers to emerge in the spring. Name two of the last wildflowers to bloom in the fall.

7. Which direction does the wind that usually brings heavy rains blow?

8. What is the last plant species you identified in the wild? What habitat was it growing in?

9. When exploring a wild area how would you find your way back through a trail-less landscape if backtracking was not an option?

10. If any poisonous snakes are present in this area, what are they? Which environments are they most likely to be found in?

11. What native vegetation is likely to first come into an abandoned field? Name three perennial species and three tree species.

12. Name three birds in this area that eat native berries and the plant species you might see them visit for fruit.

13. What time of day (during daylight hours) is least active for birdsong and calls?

15. Name three plants that signify an area stays wet all year long.

16. What deciduous tree/shrub loses its leaves early in fall? What deciduous tree/shrub loses its leaves late in the year?

17. Name a plant, shrub, or tree species you are likely to find galls on.

18. Deer trails often appear and disappear as you follow them through the landscape (particularly in rural and wild areas). What do you think the reason for this is?

19. List 4 wild plants that you often find growing together:

20. Name a woodland native plant that forms large colonies, but is slow-growing.

21. List 3 native plants that typically grow on rocks:

22. What two colors of native flowers are you most likely to see wasps visiting?

23. What is the first amphibian chorus to sing in the spring around here?

24. Name three plants in this area that are poisonous to eat:

25. What do green, shiny flies in large concentrations indicate?

26. What plant species is parasitic/hemiparasitic, depending upon another plant species for its existence?

27. In fall and winter, how do birds and squirrels behave before a cold weather pattern arrives?

28. For each of the following characteristics, name a native tree, shrub, or herbaceous species in this area with that characteristic. Don't repeat any species between characteristics.

- a. Numerous on north-facing slopes
- b. Strongly rhizomatous nature
- c. Can grow partially submerged in water
- d. Has heart-shaped leaves
- e. Dies back after blooming in spring
- f. Ill-scented blooms
- g. Has catkins
- h. Characteristic of strongly acidic soils
- i. Characteristic of basic soils

29. Name three butterflies or moths and the native host plant their caterpillar depends upon during its larval stage.

30. At what time of year are you most likely to see caterpillars about?

31. What insect becomes very abundant during late summer and early fall in grasslands and meadows?

32. You see bite marks on a plant; name four native insects this could have been caused by.

33. What type of rock(s) are found in your area?

34. If your property were left to naturally grow up, what 5 native plant species are most likely to come in? If invasive non-natives were managed, what would your property naturally look like in 20 years? 100 years? 1,000 years?

35. What was the last wild bird that you saw?

36. Why was this first named the Tourist Test?