Scavenger Hunt of Library’s Landscape Learning Laboratory

This is a scavenger hunt of the Library’s Landscaping Learning Laboratory, which contains 7 native California habitat zones and 2 mix gardens. Read both the clues and the posted signs to discover the habitat zones of California.

Two Things to Know

1. Habitat zones are not cut and dry. There will be some overlap with similar plant species found in multiple areas. So bring out your inner ecologist and learn to look between the lines to the true landscape differences.

2. There are multiple factors that affect the success of a habitat garden and all these must be considered by a landscaper. But one factor is easy to understand, identify where the sunny and shady spots lay. If plants a plant is adapted to the shade of large redwood trees, then don’t look in a sunny spot.

Think like a scientist and see if you can find each habitat zones around our library.

Clues

1. Found in large parts of southern California, this zone was the back drop for many famous western movies. Because of bouts of drought, dry summers and mild winters, the soil in this zone isn’t very fertile and the plants had to adjust to living without the rain. So its soil will be coarser and the plant leaves will be smaller and tougher. In order to support growth in this region, this habitat experiences wildfire cycles to germinate seeds and clear area for new plants.

2. Some would say this zone needs a good mowing, but this small patch provides more food, shelter, hiding spots and usable nesting material for animals, then the well-kept lawns in the quad.

3. Originating high in the mountains this area is found along the banks of rivers, which gives the habitat its name. The plants in this region are used to shade and growing on steep hillsides. Because of its rich soil and balanced water supply, the plants here have broad leaves and there is an abundance of wildflowers.

4. Similar to other areas high in the mountains. This region is fed by the Sacramento, San Joaquin and other smaller rivers that flow through the valley. Once a large portion of California’s ecosystem a lot of this habitat has been converted in to farm land, for housing and has been invaded by invasive species. Our habitat zone is no different with the groundskeepers at a constant battle over weeds removal.

5. This area is a mixed bag of nuts. It showcases plants from all over the state and demonstrating that a gardener does not need non-native plants in order to make a pretty garden. So this one is a freebee, mark “this zone” as man-made landscape.
6. This zone is where San Francisco calls home. The plants here have adapted to live in sandy soil, which is poor in nitrogen and high in salt. Because of low rainfall these plants draw most of their moist from the fog and have developed deep taproots. This area is the most disturbed habitat in California. It’s been severely invaded by non-natives and has been harmed by construction, military actions and everyday recreational activities. Don’t look in the sun for this zone as everyone knows San Francisco beaches aren’t ones for sun bathing.

7. Located down south, this habitat experiences low rain fall and high sun exposure. The plants in this environment are often stunted pale soft leafed shrubs and will shed their leaves when the weather is too hot. Also there are many succulents and low growing bushes.

8. When you’re living amongst giants you have to learn to love the shade. This habitat is full of berry bushes and large leafed plants, which have adapted to preform photosynthesis in diffused light. When one of these giants falls it is an opportunity for wildflowers and new trees to sprout. It also provides nutrients for the soil and gives shelter to amphibians, small mammals, reptiles and an array of invertebrates.

9. This area is found along the northern ranges. These mountains were formed through grinding of the North America and Pacific Oceanic tectonic plates. This created a jagged coastline and an array of soil types. The variety of soil types produces an abundance of different types of plants. So look for a mixture of plant communities with key vegetation such as ferns and bunch grasses.
Key

9. Coastal Range Mix Evergreen