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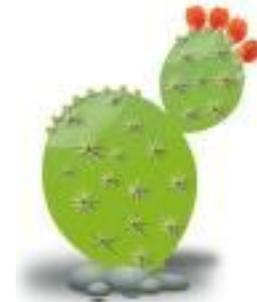
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Plant Survival Tactics

Plants like dandelions have taproots that go deep down into the earth. Taproots hold the dandelion in the dirt, and store food. This way, even if the dandelion is pulled out, the taproots that are safe in the earth continue to grow. Unlike plants with taproots, cactus roots grow just under the soil, spread out like a fan. This allows the prickly pear to quickly absorb the patchy rainfall in the desert.



Plants in the desert, like the prickly pear cactus, grow sharp spines to keep animals from eating them. Similarly, roses have thorns and thistles have prickles. Anything that gets close to the plant gets an unwanted prick.



There are plants containing chemicals that protect them. Some plants, such as poison ivy or sumac, leak irritating chemicals that causes rashes and itching on animals that come close. Other plants, like wisteria, can make animals violently ill, or even cause death. Animals learn to avoid eating these plants.



Some plants, like the strawberry or clover, send runners snaking out across the ground. New plants grow from these runners, and give the plant more chances to survive by increasing the space taken up by the plant. This way, if one part of the plant is destroyed, the other plants may be far enough away to survive.



Grapes, tomatoes and pumpkins are all plants that grow on vines. Vines are like runners, only they are more sturdy and wind themselves around things, such as posts, fences and walls. This allows them to keep the plants firmly in place, as well as spread out.



Most plants grow from seeds, however the seeds of different plants are very different. Plants such as those found on the maple tree, are very light and have large flat surfaces that catch the wind and allow them to be blown far from the plant. This allows plants to spread out, and also gives the new plants their own space to live.



If you are all done your work, talk to your classmates; discuss which “plant survival weapon” you would like to have to help you survive.