BACKYARD ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

GRADE LEVELS:
Recommended for 3rd–6th graders

TIME:
30 minutes

SUPPLIES:
- One bingo card per youth (printed off)
- One writing utensil per youth
- An outdoor space

INTRODUCTION

First, let's review. Do you know what an ecosystem is? An ecosystem is a community of living organisms interacting with their nonliving environment. Everything is part of an ecosystem and they can be as big as the universe and as small as a droplet of water. **Can you think of examples of ecosystems?** Examples include: your backyard, the neighborhood park, a school, or a beach.

What is an ecosystem service? They provide the benefits that humans receive from nature. They contribute to every aspect of our well-being.

Some examples of ecosystem services are: trees provide oxygen which we breathe and shade that keeps us cool in the summer, wetlands and plant roots help filter water, and forests provide a place for humans to recreate.

BACKYARD BINGO

Now we'll do an activity to help us discover what ecosystem services we receive from our own backyard. If you do not have a yard, use a local park or even a boulevard with some trees and grass.

Make sure that each youth has a bingo card. Each square on the card contains a different ecosystem services. It is up to youth to write or draw at least one thing in their backyard that provides that service in the square. Challenge your youth to first see if they can get bingo. Once they earn a bingo, challenge them to try and fill in every square on their card. There are 2 different bingo cards included in this lesson, so youth can compete against each other if they wish.

DISCUSS

Were you surprised by how many services your backyard provides? A single tree can provide huge benefits for humans, plants, and animals by taking in carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen, providing shade for humans, food and habitat for animals, and a growing area for more plants.

Why is it important to protect different natural areas? Different areas of the world provide different ecosystem services. For example, the rainforest contains medicinal plants that aren't found anywhere else! Large forests also help regulate global carbon dioxide levels. Our oceans help regulate the water cycle, give many food, and provide recreation.

BACKYARD BINGO
CARD 1

FIND SOMETHING THAT....(AND FILL IN WHAT THE ITEM IS THAT YOU SAW. DRAW IT OR WRITE IT OUT!)

B	I	N	G	O
Could be used for medicine:	Prevents erosion:	Provides a habitat for other plants:	Can be used for energy/fuel:	Can help cycle nutrients:
Can provide habitat for animals:	Can reduce flooding:	Can be used to build things:	Makes you happy/reduces stress:	Can provide food for animals:
Creates learning opportunities:	Can improve water quality:	FREE SPACE	Can filter air:	Helps cycle nutrients:
Provides shade:	Can bring people together:	Preserves history:	Has economic ($) value:	Can inspire art:
Filters rain water:	May attract pollinators:	Can provide recreation:	Protects against noise:	Can provide food for humans:

BACKYARD BINGO
CARD 2

FIND SOMETHING THAT....(AND FILL IN WHAT THE ITEM IS THAT YOU SAW. DRAW IT OR WRITE IT OUT!)

B	I	N	G	O
Helps cycle nutrients:	Has economic ($) value:	Provides shade:	Preserves history:	Creates learning opportunities:
Protects against noise:	Can inspire art:	Filters rain water:	Can filter air:	Can be used to build things:
Can help cycle nutrients:	Can provide food for humans:	FREE SPACE	May attract pollinators:	Can provide recreation:
Provides a habitat for other plants:	Can provide food for animals:	Makes you happy/reduces stress:	Prevents erosion:	Can improve water quality:
Can reduce flooding:	Can be used for energy/fuel:	Could be used for medicine:	Can provide habitat for animals:	Can bring people together: