







Putting the Right Plant in the Right Place *Middle School (6-8)* 

## **OVERVIEW**

In this lesson, students will use provided facts and data about different native plants and conditions at Arlington National Cemetery to make and defend planting decisions. This lesson can either be used as a unit culminating activity or, with modifications, as an introductory activity to a unit on plants and the environment.

Resources include a PowerPoint, plant cards, cemetery maps, a worksheet, and a grading rubric.

Estimated time: 1 class period (45-60 minutes)

## **STANDARDS**

Content standards vary by state. This lesson can be used to teach the following state standards and similar wording may be found in your state standards.

- VA.6.C: Interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating data
  - o construct, analyze, and interpret graphical displays of data
  - use data to evaluate and refine design solutions
- VA.6.D: Constructing and critiquing conclusions and explanations
  - construct explanations that includes qualitative or quantitative relationships between variables
  - construct scientific explanations based on valid and reliable evidence obtained from sources (including the students' own investigations)
  - generate and compare multiple solutions to problems based on how well they meet the criteria and constraints
- VA.6.9: The student will investigate and understand that humans impact the environment and individuals can influence public policy decisions related to energy and the environment. Key ideas include:
  - o natural resources are important to protect and maintain;
  - renewable and nonrenewable resources can be managed;
  - o preventive measures can protect land-use and reduce environmental hazards; and
  - there are cost/benefit tradeoffs in conservation policies.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Students will describe the biotic and abiotic factors of their planting location.
- Students will describe the appeal of different native plants to visitors, cemetery staff, and local wildlife.







- Using information about their planting conditions, students will decide as a group which plants should be used in their given location.
- After finishing their "plant plan," students will present and defend their plant selection.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

- PowerPoint
- Plant Cards
- Plant Plan Maps
- Plant Plan Worksheet
- Grading Rubric

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Located along the Potomac River, Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia occupies over 600 acres and has more than 8,600 trees. It is both a national military cemetery and a Level III arboretum. As an arboretum, the cemetery's collection of trees and shrubs are cultivated for scientific or display purposes. An important mission for the staff includes the care of the selected trees and shrubs. As an active cemetery, Arlington faces restraints and considerations not commonly found at other arboretums.

Arborists and horticulturists make decisions about what species of trees and shrubs should be planted in different locations. This happens when an existing plant is damaged by wind, pest, or disease and must be removed. These decisions are also made when new sections of the cemetery have been designed and opened.

# **LESSON ACTIVITIES**

- Concept & ANC Introduction: 5 minutes
  - o Slide 2: Today we're going to take what we've learned so far about plants, soil, and the environment and use that information to make decisions.
  - Slide 3: We're going to be making our decisions about what to plant and where to plant it at a special place: Arlington National Cemetery. The cemetery is located along the Potomac River in Virginia, right across from Washington, D.C. There are some specific things about it that make planting decisions harder than they would be in your backyard or local park.
    - Animation 1: First, it's a cemetery. In fact, the cemetery has around 400,000 gravesites. Like you can see in the picture, graves are grouped together. They're surrounded by grass that gets mowed. So, there are some limits on what plants can go where.
    - Animation 2: Second, it gets visitors. These visitors come to have a solemn experience. They might be visiting a family member or, because it's a famous









- Animation 3: Third, it's an historic property. The cemetery is over 150 years old and before it was a cemetery, it was a plantation with a large house. Since it's historic, they need to take care of structures (like the amphitheater in the picture) that have been there for a long, long time.
- Animation 4: Fourth, it's on the banks of the Potomac River. This means that anything on the property that gets washed down the hills can end up in the river, then Chesapeake Bay, and eventually the ocean.
- Animation 5: Fifth, it's also an arboretum. An arboretum is a special kind of garden focusing on trees. In fact, there are more than 8,600 trees!
- The Assignment: 5-10 minutes
  - Slide 4: While the cemetery makes every effort to keep their trees and shrubs healthy, things happen: disease, pests, or storms can damage or kill plants. The cemetery has also expanded at different times and new sections have been built. So, the horticulture team is regularly replacing or adding new trees and shrubs. Today you're going to work in groups of 4 to decide what trees and shrubs should be planted in different parts of the cemetery.
  - Slide 5: Things to Consider:
    - As you design, you want to keep the following things in mind and be ready to explain how the plants you choose work in the conditions in your location.
      - Location:
        - What other plants or structures are nearby?
        - Is there enough room for the plant you chose?
        - When the plant is full-grown, will it block any views?
        - Will the plant be in sun or shade?
      - Soil:
        - What are the soil conditions like?
        - Does the ground drain slowly?
        - Is it dry for long periods in the summer?
      - Wildlife:
        - The cemetery is home to coyotes, deer, foxes, and many species of bird. Will your plants provide any benefits of food or shelter for them?
      - Visitor experience:
        - Most visitors come in the summer, but spring and fall also get a lot of visitors.
          - Are the plants visually interesting?
          - Do they have unusual colors or seasonal interest?
          - Do they still look interesting in the winter?









• Is there other information about this plant that makes it more or less attractive for this location?

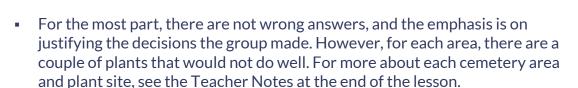
### Activity: 15-20 minutes

- Slide 6: There are four areas of the cemetery where you'll help choose trees and shrubs to plant. Each area has biotic and abiotic factors that are specific to that area. More detailed information about your area will be available on your map.
- o The areas are:
  - Columbarium: There are no headstones in this section. Instead, there are
    columbarium walls. Some people choose to be cremated instead of buried. When
    someone is cremated, their ashes are saved in an urn. While families may choose to
    keep the urn or scatter the ashes, they can also be placed in a columbarium niche
    with a plaque that has the same information a headstone would have. The
    cemetery has several columbarium areas. (top left picture)
  - Rain Garden: The cemetery also has several rain gardens. A rain garden is designed to collect rainwater and allow it to slowly soak into the soil. The rain garden also filters sediments and chemicals out of the water. (top right picture)
  - Section 27: This is an older section of the cemetery. No new burials take place in this section, but the groundskeepers do take care of the plants and graves. Because of the history of this section, it receives a good number of visitors. (bottom left picture)
  - USS Maine Memorial: The area around the Maine Memorial receives a lot of visitors. It's in the hilly part of the cemetery and near other prominent memorials and graves.
- Divide class into groups of 4 (multiple groups can plan the same section) and pass out the following supplies:
  - Plant cards (1 set per group): Information cards about six native trees and six native shrubs. Students use this information to help them choose what to plant.
  - **Plant Plan maps (1 per group):** A map and information sheet about their cemetery area. Includes information on temperature, precipitation, soil and wildlife.
  - Plant Plan worksheet (either 1 per group OR 1 per person): A worksheet for recording the trees and bushes their group choose. There is also space to identify biotic and abiotic factors and justify their choice of plants.
- Present to Class: 15-20 minutes
  - Slide 7: Share Your "Plant Plan"
    - Groups can either choose one member to act as spokesperson or each talk about one of their four sites.
    - Students are expected to share:
      - Which area of the cemetery they planned
      - The biotic and abiotic factors for their area
      - Which plant they choose for each site
      - Their reasons for choosing that plant
    - Grading
      - While student present, teacher uses the grading rubric to grade each group.









#### Conclusion: 5 minutes

- o Conclude the lesson with a brief discussion of the following questions:
  - Why is it important to put the right plant in the right place?
  - How did you decide that the plant was right for the place?

### **TEACHER NOTES ABOUT EACH SECTION:**

- Across the Cemetery:
  - **Temperature:** On average, summers are warm and muggy. Temperatures rise above 90° almost 30 days per year. In the winter, low temperatures regularly fall below freezing.
  - **Precipitation:** Arlington averages 43 inches of rain per year. Monthly precipitation fluctuates between a low average of 2.9 inches (February) and a high average of 4.3 inches (May). Arlington also averages 15 inches of snow per year.
  - Care and Maintenance: ANC horticulturists strive to select plants that will flourish with minimal care. While plants receive necessary care and support (pruning, pest and disease control, etc.), they are not regularly watered.

#### Columbarium:

- Location:
  - Structures include sidewalks and the walls of the columbarium.
  - As the trees in this area are young and shorter, most sites receive plenty of sunlight.
- Soil:
  - Site 1: 3 shrubs (same species); light clay soil that drains well.
  - Site 2: 2 shrubs (same species); heavy clay soil that drains slowly.
  - Site 3: 1 tree; heavy clay soil in a small space that is often damp.
  - Site 4: 1 tree; light clay soil that drains well.
- Wildlife: The Columbarium is located near Arlington Woods, which is a 12-acre section of land administered by the National Parks Service. (NPS also manages Arlington House, which is located within the cemetery boundaries.) Arlington Woods is an old growth forest and home to many mammal and bird species.
- **Visitors:** Most visitors are family members visiting the inurnment site of a relative.

## • Rain Garden:

- Location:
  - Structures include sidewalks and parking lots. There are also administration buildings nearby.
  - Because of all the concrete areas, most of the sites receive plenty of sunshine.
- Soil:
  - Site 1: 3 shrubs (same species); heavy clay soil in rain garden
  - Site 2: 2 shrubs (same species); heavy clay soil on edge of rain garden.
  - Site 3: 1 tree; heavy clay soil near rain garden.











- Wildlife: These rain gardens are located near the Welcome Center and parking lots. There are few mammal visitors. Most wildlife are insects and birds.
- **Visitors:** This area is frequented by staff who use the staff parking lot. Most visitors in this area are attending a funeral and waiting in their cars for the funeral procession to start.

#### Section 27:

#### Location:

- Structures include roads and an old house for grounds keepers that is now used as an office.
- This section is one of the oldest in the cemetery and includes many older headstones and large trees.

#### Soil:

- Site 1: 2 shrubs (same species); trees provide partial shade; soil is a good mix of silt and clay.
- Site 2: 2 shrubs (same species); building blocks sunlight until mid-afternoon; soil is a good mix of silt and clay.
- Site 3: 1 tree; replacement for large oak tree that previously grew in this
- Site 4: 1 tree; nearby trees provide partial shade from early afternoon on.
- Wildlife: Section 27 is one of the oldest in the cemetery. No new funerals are taking place and it receives a medium amount of visitors. The older trees are attractive to squirrels and a variety of birds.
- Visitors: Most visitors are interested in the history of the cemetery. Some are looking for specific graves, but most are simply exploring.

### **USS Maine Memorial:**

#### Location:

- Structures include the mast of the USS Maine, the ship's anchor, two cannons, the road that encircles the mast, sidewalks, and stairs.
- This area has a mixture of young and mature trees. Shrubs around the monument have a more formal appearance.

#### Soil:

- Site 1: 3 shrubs (same species); light clay soil that drains well.
- Site 2: 5 small shrubs (same species); replacing a formal box hedge in a partially shaded area.
- Site 3: 1 tree; soil is a mixture that drains well.
- Site 4: 1 tree; soil is a mixture that drains well.
- Wildlife: Fox and small mammals visit more wooded areas nearby. Birds and insects are the most common wildlife near the memorial.
- Visitors: This site receives many visitors because of its proximity to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Most of the visitors are tourists, not family members. Visitation is highest during the summer.









- Many organizations support tree planting in local communities. Look for opportunities near you to participate in community planting events.
- Consider starting a garden at your school or partnering with local organizations, such as members of a community garden, to plant trees or other plants on your campus or in your community.

### PLANNING A VISIT TO ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY?

At the cemetery, you can see the different sections of the cemetery that were referenced in this lesson. There's also a horticulture tour for school groups which provides information about Arlington's status as an arboretum, the variety of plant species found there, and the care and upkeep of the grounds.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

We'd love to see your students' designs! Share a picture with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Tag Arlington National Cemetery using @ArlingtonNatl and hashtags #ANCEducation and #ANCEnvironment.







## **ADDITIONAL IMAGES**

Additional images of the sections of the cemetery used in this lesson are provided below. The lesson can be taught without using these images, but the images provide additional context or perspective for each site.

### **COLUMBARIUM:**



Looking eastward at Columbarium Courts 10 and 11 shortly after completion in 2018. Site #2 is in the right center of the image. Site #1 is on the bottom left. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser)



Inside Columbarium Court 11 in 2020. This is an example of Site #3. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser)









An aerial view of Columbarium Courts 10 and 11 in 2018. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser)







# **RAIN GARDENS:**



This rain garden features a bioswale that helps remove debris and any pollution. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser, 2018)



A 2018 rain garden tour. Sidewalks and parking lots are visible in the background. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser)







# **SECTION 27:**



Section 27 is one of the oldest sections of the cemetery. It is full of historic headstones and mature trees. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser, 2020)



An aerial view of the cemetery shows the old grounds keeper house in the center of the image. Section 27 has many mature trees and is on the northern edge of the cemetery. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser, 2018)







# **USS MAINE MEMORIAL:**



The mast of the USS Maine is now a memorial in the cemetery. The sidewalk provides the main approach for visitors. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser, 2019)



Trees of different sizes surround the **USS** Maine Memorial. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser, 2018)







The anchor of the USS Maine is part of the memorial. A low yew hedge is visible behind the anchor. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser, 2018)



View of the Maine from the south. The anchor is visible in the middle of the image in front of the Maine. (ANC/ Elizabeth Fraser, 2018)







# THE PLANT PLAN GRADING RUBRIC

If you're unfamiliar with single-point rubrics, you can learn more <u>here</u>.

Points are awarded so that meeting all criteria results in 85/100 points. Students must score advanced in some areas to receive a grade over 85.

# PRESENTATION RUBRIC

CATEGORY	Concerns Areas that Need Work	Criteria Standards for this Performance	Advanced Evidence of Exceeding Standards
Worked Cooperatively		Team members shared the workload and worked cooperatively.	
		/10	
Area Stated		Stated which section of the cemetery the team planned/5	
Biotic and Abiotic Factors		Correctly identified at least 3 biotic and 3 abiotic factors/10	
Site #1		Plant would work in this site and some justification is provided/15	
Site #2		Plant would work in this site and some justification is provided/15	
Site #3		Plant would work in this site and some justification is provided/15	
Site #4		Plant would work in this site and some justification is provided/15	
Totals		/100	







## **LESSON SOURCES**

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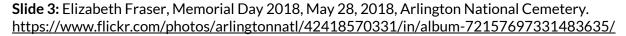
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### **IMAGES:**

- **Page 8:** Elizabeth Fraser, Millennium Project Columbarium Courts 10 and 11 Horticultural and Stormwater Features, July 20, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery.
- https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/42816988074/in/album-72157671394874338/
- **Page 8:** Elizabeth Fraser, Columbarium Court 11, May 23, 2020, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49927337173/in/album-72157714010637113/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49927337173/in/album-72157714010637113/</a>
- **Page 9:** Elizabeth Fraser, Aerial Photography of Arlington National Cemetery, April 18, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/41996649872/in/album-72157668853808188/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/41996649872/in/album-72157668853808188/</a>
- **Page 10:** Elizabeth Fraser, ANC Memorial Rain Garden Tour, October 12, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/31401281268/in/album-72157699118709692/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/31401281268/in/album-72157699118709692/</a>
- **Page 10:** Elizabeth Fraser, ANC Memorial Rain Garden Tour, October 12, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/45226001792/in/album-72157699118709692/
- **Page 11:** Elizabeth Fraser, Spring 2020, April 22, 2020, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49809523258/in/album-72157714106026731/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49809523258/in/album-72157714106026731/</a>
- **Page 11:** Elizabeth Fraser, Aerial Photography of Arlington National Cemetery, April 18, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/42041089251/in/album-72157668853808188/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/42041089251/in/album-72157668853808188/</a>
- **Page 12:** Elizabeth Fraser, Spring Horticulture Highlights 2019, April 17, 2019, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/40670598373/in/album-72157709723345996/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/40670598373/in/album-72157709723345996/</a>
- **Page 12:** Elizabeth Fraser, Fall Foliage 2018, November 2, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/45685840211/in/album-72157699715767602/
- **Page 13:** Elizabeth Fraser, USS Maine Memorial in Section 24, January 19, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/39691747484/in/album-72157665989780318/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/39691747484/in/album-72157665989780318/</a>
- **Page 13:** Elizabeth Fraser, Spring Snow Storm 2018, March 21, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/40945826251/in/album-72157693997238804/
- **Slide 1:** Elizabeth Fraser, Spring 2020, March 17, 2020, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49676689336/in/album-72157713448666422/
- **Slide 2:** Carola68, Tool Garden Forke Pitchfork Old, No date, Pixabay. <a href="https://pixabay.com/photos/tool-garden-forke-pitchfork-old-4958040/">https://pixabay.com/photos/tool-garden-forke-pitchfork-old-4958040/</a>
- **Slide 3:** Elizabeth Fraser, Rain at Arlington National Cemetery, February 11, 2020, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49521206471/in/album-72157717157233606/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49521206471/in/album-72157717157233606/</a>







**Slide 3:** Elizabeth Fraser, Tanner Amphitheater - Full Restoration, June 12, 2019, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/48050753222/in/album-72157709052868476/

**Slide 3:** Elizabeth Fraser, Aerial Photography of Arlington National Cemetery, April 18, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/27170613737/in/album-72157674220937287/

**Slide 3:** Elizabeth Fraser, Aerial Photography of Arlington National Cemetery, April 18, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/40233341380/in/album-72157692232445350/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/40233341380/in/album-72157692232445350/</a>

**Slide 5:** Elizabeth Fraser, Fox in Section 3, January 30, 2020, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49534508111/in/album-72157713107576498/

**Slides 6 & 7:** Elizabeth Fraser, Millennium Project Columbarium Courts 10 and 11 Horticultural and Stormwater Features, July 20, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery.

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**Slides 6 & 7:** Elizabeth Fraser, ANC Memorial Rain Garden Tour, October 12, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/31401281268/in/album-72157699118709692/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/31401281268/in/album-72157699118709692/</a>

**Slides 6 & 7:** Elizabeth Fraser, Spring 2020, April 22, 2020, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49809523258/in/album-72157714106026731/

**Slides 6 & 7:** Elizabeth Fraser, Spring Horticulture Highlights 2019, April 17, 2019, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/40670598373/in/album-72157709723345996/

**Slide 8:** Elizabeth Fraser, Seasonal Highlights at ANC, March 10, 2020, Arlington National Cemetery. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/49647667433/in/album-72157713448666422/