

Clubmoss

Identification Cards

Background

Clubmosses are primitive plants. This means they do not have flowers or seeds, but reproduce through spores. Clubmosses are evergreen, so they can be found and identified all year. They are short plants, and a lot of them are trailing, or long and low like a ground-clinging vine. Historically, people used clubmosses for Christmas decorations, and the spores, which are quite flammable, were used in firework production. Eight species of clubmosses live in West Virginia. Here we will look at the most common four: two that grow statewide, and two that live in the mountains.

Objectives

Children become budding botanists, having fun hiking to find clubmosses, or looking for them in the yard or a local natural area. They learn identification, habitat, size estimation, and map skills.

Method

Children cut out and use the Clubmoss cards to find and identify common species. They also measure plant equivalents.

Materials

Clubmoss Cards, ruler, pencil, journal (optional).

What to do

1. Cut out and read the Clubmoss cards together. Look at the map of West Virginia on the card. Figure out which species are found in your area. Find objects that are about the same length of each species. Note on each card (or in your journal) the object you found that matches the plant in length.
2. Go out in the yard and look for clubmosses. Note where each plant species was found on the cards (or in your journal). Note the other interesting things you found while looking.
3. Go on a hike nearby (a walk if you live in the city) and look for more species. Note the ones that you find in your journal. Note the other things you notice while looking: temperature, weather, sounds, smells and sights.
4. For more clubmoss fun, check out this children's book:
Ferns, Mosses & other Spore-producing Plants (Kingdom Classifications)
by Steve Parker.

Information compiled by Karen McClure

Common Clubmoss



Lycopodium clavatum

Height: 3 to 10 inches

Leaves: Tipped with a fine hair

Branch width: 1/8 inch

Spores: On fork-shaped growths that grow from the top of some branches

Growth pattern: Trailing

Habitat: Woods and swamps

Range: Grant, Mineral, Monongalia, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Tucker, Upshur and Webster counties

Note: Native Americans made a tea of the plant to treat pain, fever and weakness. In the old days, the spores were used to treat diarrhea, dysentery, gas and rheumatism. The spores were also used as a diuretic and to stop bleeding. The spores were used in medicinal powders for baby chafing, tangled or matted hair with parasites and strep rashes.

WARNING: This plant contains a toxic alkaloid.



Shining Clubmoss



Huperzia lucidula

Height: 4 to 10 inches

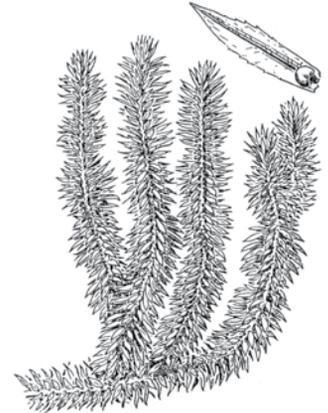
Leaf length: 1/4 to 1/2 inch

Spores: At the base of each leaf

Growth pattern: Trailing

Habitat: Cool, moist woods

Range: Statewide



Groundpine



Lycopodium digitatum

This clubmoss is also called ground cedar, because it resembles red cedar trees on the ground

Height: 1 to 2 1/2 inches

Leaves: Tiny leaves press against the stems

Spores: On fork-shaped growths that are taller than the rest of the plant

Growth pattern: Trailing

Habitat: Dry woods to open fields

Range: Statewide



Tree Clubmoss



Lycopodium dendroideum

Height: 4 to 12 inches

Leaves: Tiny leaves stick out from all around the stem

Spores: On two tall skinny cones at top of "tree"

Growth pattern: Erect (main stem underground)

Habitat: Moist, rich woods

Range: Fayette, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hardy, McDowell, Monongalia, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Raleigh, Randolph, Tucker, and Upshur counties



Shining Clubmoss

Huperzia lucidula



Karen McClure/W DNR

Common Clubmoss

Lycopodium clavatum



Bill Beatty

Tree Clubmoss

Lycopodium dendroideum



Bill Beatty

Groundpine

Lycopodium digitatum



P.J. Harmon / W DNR