Existing Resources

Foraging Texas: Identifying Edible Plants in the Wild
Benchmarking Research for Instructional Reference Project

Trends: For the most part, the sites that I encountered presented plants in a database-type format, with each entry having similar information and an identifying photograph (reusable content formatting). Given the amount of information pertinent to the topic, the sites tended to be overly cluttered –good for exploration, but bad for focused, systematic learning. Two of the sites were blogs, which provided personal experience that made the information more engaging. Mostly, the sites focused on Absorb-type activities, with some opportunity to Connect through workshops, classes, email, blog responses, and social media. Do-type activities were geared toward in-person visits or workshops, rather than online learning.

  - Pros:
    - Very extensive and detailed information on a large number of plants.
    - Several ways to access information (by season, environment, plant type, use, color, name, or search).
    - Blog covers a wide range of topics and is not just limited to personal accounts.
    - Consistent format and presentation of plant types and uses (reusable content)
    - Opportunities to Connect through Facebook, Twitter, and classes.
    - Good list of additional resources.
    - Good use of metadata
    - Good instruction on how to harvest and use the plants
  - Cons:
    - Design feels chaotic—information overload.
    - No online Do-type activities.

- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (website): http://www.wildflower.org/
  - Pros:
    - Extensive plant database, but not limited to edible plants
    - Has a seedling recognition gallery for identifying plants when they are young
    - Has many options for Connecting and sharing content (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, email, etc.)
    - Offers Do-Type activities for onsite visits (e.g. scavenger hunts) and

- Opportunities to volunteer and take classes.
- Several ways to access plant information (by location, appearance, lifespan, light requirements, soil moisture, bloom time, color, height, or search), and the site includes a site map.

  - Cons:
    - Edible plant category is difficult to locate (it is under the Ask Mr. Smarty Plants section).
    - Even once you have found the section on edible plants the information is difficult to navigate and absorb unless you know precisely what you are looking for.

  
  - Pros:
    - Clean, consistent design.
    - Personal point-of-view makes reading engaging.
    - Topics vary from gathering to cooking to forage-related news.
    - Useful and relevant set of links to other resources.
    - Good visual interest through use of photography.
    - Opportunities to Connect and Do through blog responses and classes.
  
  - Cons:
    - Limited interactivity. There are no online Do-type activities.
    - Difficult to navigate plant types. The site only allows you to explore through a search tool, links to recent posts, or scrolling. There is no navigation by plant type or other organizing methodologies.
    - Connect-type activities are limited to blog comments.

**Original Requirements**

**Audience/Prerequisites:** My project will be aimed at foragers who want to practice identifying plants before they enter the field so that they can increase their success rates. The project will be designed for beginning foragers that are already interested in foraging and that have some basic knowledge of the safety concerns that go along with foraging wild plants.

**Originality:** In addition to providing Absorb and Connect activities, this project will focus on Do-type learning activities that can be performed online. Primarily, the activities will be game based and will allow the user to learn how to identify edible plants, and practice picking edible plants from non-edible plants.