



Open Access Curriculum

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TITLE: Seed Dispersal Icebreaker

SUMMARY: A facilitator leads a group exercise designed to help participants think about layers of privilege and oppression on an individual and group scale, with an emphasis on sustainability and multispecies urban livability. Icebreakers similar to this one have been practiced by many groups in many forms and contexts. This version was inspired by iterations by Soul Fire Farm co-founder Leah Penniman and by climate scientist Andrew Jones, and has been adapted further to fit NESL's themes.

AGES: 13 and up, or younger with content adapted to suit a younger demographic.

GROUP SIZE: Flexible.

SITE: Flexible, but designed for an urban setting (in or outdoors) where participants are gathering for a workshop or other activity. There should be enough space for all participants to stand in a circle.

RESOURCE LIST/SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

Next Epoch Seed Library's guide to seed collecting
Ellie's urban ecology radio segment on Wild Urban Primrose Diversity

LEARNING & EXPERIENTIAL OUTCOMES:

- Consider layers of privilege and oppression on an individual and group scale.
- Learn a little about the members of a new community.
- Form a tactile relationship with the seeds of wild urban plants.

MATERIALS:

- Cups, 1 per participant (non-disposable if possible, otherwise paper cups that can be reused)
- Seeds, at least 35 per participant (A range of seeds locally collected from spontaneous urban plants)
- Large bowl or other container
- Envelopes for seed dispersal, 1 per participant if all want to disperse seeds

INSTRUCTIONS:

Set up: Place a large bowl in the center of the space where the exercise will take place. Around the bowl, arrange cups with an assortment of seeds collected according to NESL's seed collecting guidelines. There should be one cup per participant, with each cup including at least 35 seeds. If possible, make different mixtures of seeds between the cups, so that the mixture created in the bowl at the end will be more diverse than any one cup.

Invite participants to stand in a stand in a loose circle around the cups, facilitator included.

Facilitator: "This is a simple exercise (an icebreaker of sorts, or perhaps an ice melter) designed to help us learn a bit about who we are as a group, and who we are as individuals. I'll be participating too."



You may have done something similar before. To begin, please set forward and choose a cup from the center of the circle, and return to your spot.

Allow a few moments for participants to collect a cup and return to their spots in the circle.

Facilitator: “In your cup you have an assortment of seeds collected from plants growing wild in the streets, sidewalks, parking lots, and other urban infrastructure of this city. Throughout the exercise, you’ll disperse some of these seeds into our collective bowl in the center of our circle. This is how it will work: I am going to read a list of thirty short statements. Each time I read a statement, if that statement is true for you, you will step forward and deposit a seed in the bowl, then pause for a moment until you hear me say “step back.” If that statement is not true for you, you don’t know, or you would rather not reply (which is totally fine) you can stay in your spot. Is that clear? Ok, let’s begin.”

1. Disperse a seed if your primary home is in a different time zone (pause)
 - Step back
2. Disperse a seed if you crossed a national border to get here (pause)
 - Step back
3. Disperse a seed if you crossed an ocean to get here (pause)
 - Step back
4. Disperse a seed if you crossed a mountain range to get here (pause)
 - Step back
5. Disperse a seed if you crossed a river to get here (pause)
 - Step back
6. Disperse a seed if you came here on public transit (pause)
 - Step back
7. Disperse a seed if you consider yourself an artist (pause)
 - Step back
8. Disperse a seed if you consider yourself a scientist (pause)
 - Step back
9. Disperse a seed if you consider yourself a teacher (pause)
 - Step back
10. Disperse a seed if you consider yourself an activist (pause)
 - Step back
11. Disperse a seed if you consider yourself a writer (pause)
 - Step back
12. Disperse a seed if you consider yourself a technologist (pause)
 - Step back
13. Disperse a seed if you identify as a person of color (pause)
 - Step back
14. Disperse a seed if you identify as queer (pause)
 - Step back
15. Disperse a seed if you identify as trans (pause)
 - Step back
16. Disperse a seed if you have a disability, visible or not visible (pause)
 - Step back
17. Disperse a seed if you identify as indigenous to the place you were born (pause)
 - Step back
18. Disperse a seed if you are an immigrant (pause)
 - Step back



19. Disperse a seed if one or both of your parents were immigrants (pause)
 - Step back
20. Disperse a seed if one or both of your grandparents were immigrants (pause)
 - Step back
21. Disperse a seed if you have ancestors who were brought to this continent by force (pause)
 - Step back
22. Disperse a seed if you own a car (pause)
 - Step back
23. Disperse a seed if you own your home (pause)
 - Step back
24. Disperse a seed if you own a yard or other greenspace (pause)
 - Step back
25. Disperse a seed if you have public greenspace within 5 minutes of your home (pause)
 - Step back
26. Disperse a seed if you can buy fresh produce within 5 minutes of your home (pause)
 - Step back
27. Disperse a seed if you can forage fresh produce within 5 minutes of your home (pause)
 - Step back
28. Disperse a seed if you grow or raise some of your own food (pause)
 - Step back
29. Disperse a seed if you produce your own food in your body (pause)
 - Step back
30. Disperse a seed if there is a tree within 100 feet of your home (pause)
 - Step back
31. Disperse another seed you think that tree is healthy (pause)
 - Step back
32. Disperse a seed if you identify as something else in addition to or instead any of those things (pause)
 - Step back

Provide a moment for participants to disperse additional seeds

Facilitator: “Does anyone want to share what else they dispersed a seed for?”

Provide some time for sharing and discussion if the group is so inclined

Facilitator: “If there are no more seeds to disperse, I thank you for participating in this activity. You can place your cups back in the center, and return to your spot in the circle.

Allow a few moments for participants to place their cups and return to their spots in the circle. While they do this the facilitator should also return their cup, and pick up the bowl in the center, then continue when all have returned to the circle.

I will keep the seeds you didn't disperse for future use, and those you've placed in this bowl will be further dispersed into the urban ecosystem of this city. As cities grow, plant habitats get fragmented by development. Seed dispersal (and thus gene flow) between different areas can be inhibited by barriers like buildings, highways, parking lots and even large, heavily maintained lawns. Like birds or wind, humans can also serve as seed dispersers, assisting these seeds in finding fertile ground in which to germinate. If you'd like to be a seed disperser, please see me at the end of this workshop, and I'll send you off with some seeds!”

