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Children receive hands-on experience

PLANTS continued from front page

members an opportunity to learn more about culturally significant plants such as camas, onion, milkweed and tarweed.

Children also had an opportunity to inspect dogwood and ninebark cuttings, which were traditionally used to make tools and basketry.

“Part of what Grand Ronde is doing as a part of the Plants for People program is to show

the kids Native plants, their cultural uses and how to grow them,” said Lead Silviculture/Fire Protection Technician Jeremy Ojua, who helped lead the workshops. “This is the first time we have come to the Education building to do a class with the kids. We want to make it as fun and hands-on as possible.”

The preschoolers were given photocopies of pictures with various plants and learned about the cultural uses of each one. For example, milkweed was used for medicine and is also a host plant to a caterpillar that transforms into the Monarch butterfly, while onions and camas are edibles.

After a brief lesson, the children were each given small shovels and containers to put dirt in. Then, they came back into class to plant the seeds, which can later be replanted in the ground.

Ojua was assisted by Stacy and Peter Moore of the Corvallis-based Institute for Applied Ecology, which has an education and habitat resto-

ration program.

“A few years ago, we hosted a plant program for adults and thought it would be neat to offer it to students, too,” Stacy said. “Many students and adults today spend too much time connected to technology and they miss connections with nature and real people. This allows young people to get their hands dirty and learn more about where their foods are from. It gives a connection to the land and their heritage.”

In the fall, students harvested camas bulbs at the Natural Resources Department, which were later outplanted at the Herbert Farm natural area south of Corvallis by Grand Ronde and Institute for Applied Ecology staff and volunteers as part of the Plants for People Phase II.

The purpose is to restore historical prairie, oak and riparian habitat within five sites in the Willamette Valley and establish partnerships between Tribes, the agricultural community and public land managers.

“We have really enjoyed partnering with Jeremy and the Natural Resources Department,” Stacy said. “We also bring our skills and expertise to the program. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

Peter enjoys the connection to the Tribe and community.

“That is the whole point, having that connection,” he said. “Talking with the young kids is the start of that.” ■

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