



Planting Seeds of Success: Cultivating Connections and Growth in the Freshman Experience

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Roots form first

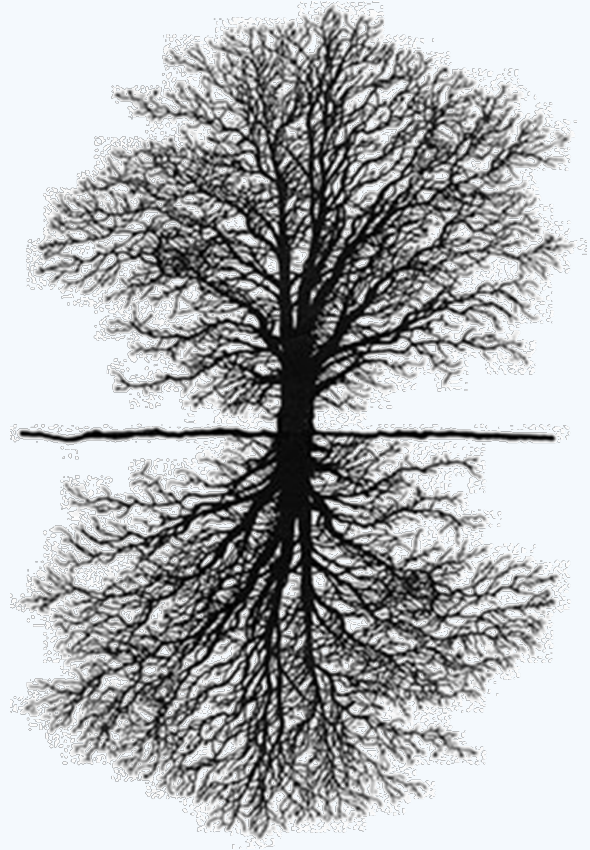
They support EVERYTHING on top

No growth, no blooms, no fruit - without strong roots

The top can only get as big as the roots are to be able to support it!

Roots anchor, roots take in water, roots store water and food

Surround yourself with those that keep you ROOTED!

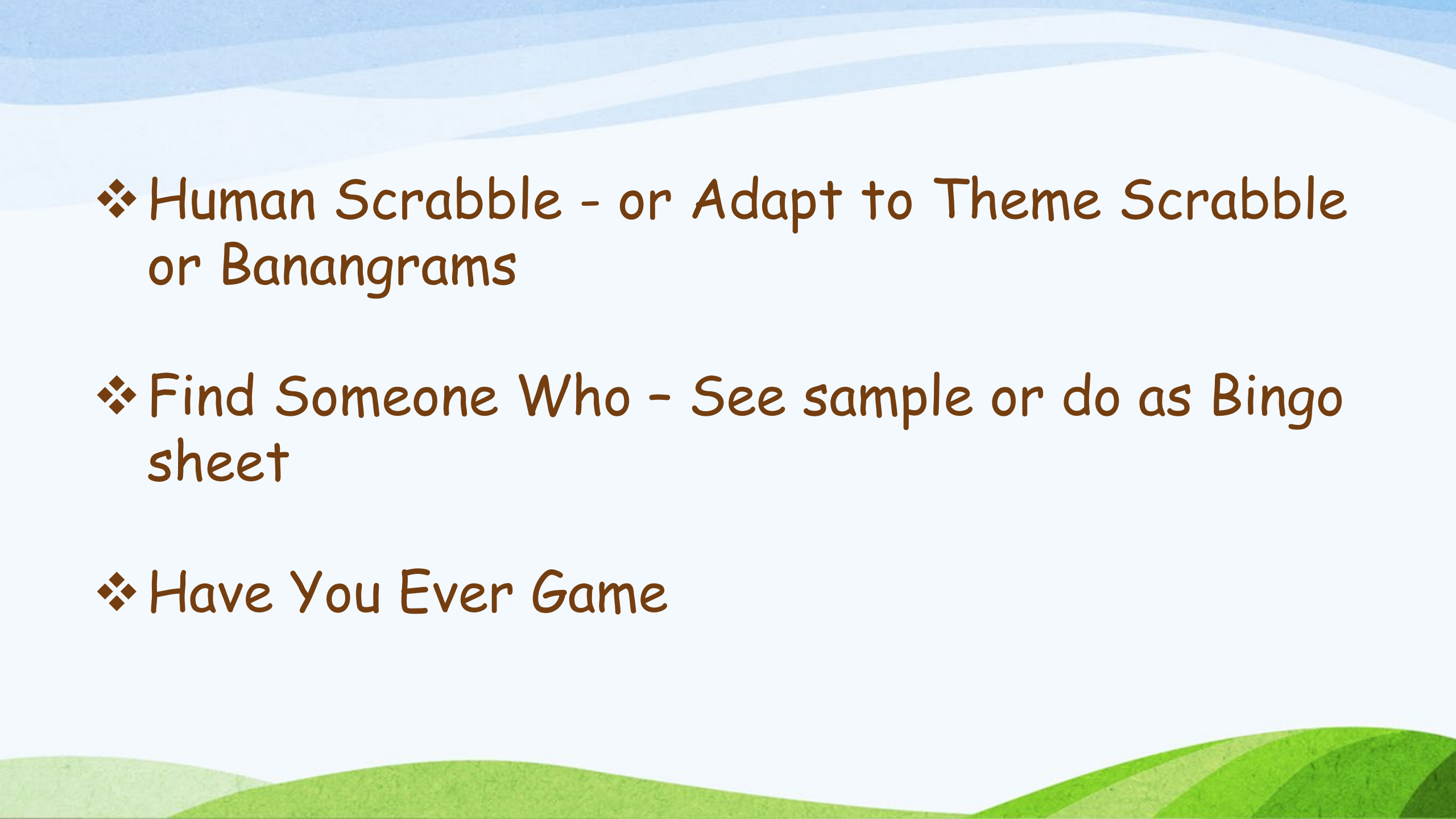


A stylized, layered landscape illustration. The foreground features rolling green hills in various shades of green, with a dark brown path or streambed winding through them. On the left, there are three distinct plants: a green tree-like bush, a purple flower-like bush, and a cluster of orange flowers. Above the green hills, a white band represents the sky, with a small red bird flying in the upper left. The background consists of several horizontal, wavy bands of light blue and white, suggesting distant hills or a layered sky.

Building Connections and Common Ground

Ice breaker games
with a purpose!



- 
- ❖ Human Scrabble - or Adapt to Theme Scrabble or Banangrams
 - ❖ Find Someone Who - See sample or do as Bingo sheet
 - ❖ Have You Ever Game

The background is a stylized illustration. The sky is composed of several horizontal, wavy bands of blue in varying shades. Below the sky are rolling hills in various shades of green. On the left side, there is a red bird in flight, a green tree, a purple flower, and some orange foliage. A brown path or stream winds through the hills. The text "Water and Nurture" Through Mentorships is written in a brown, serif font, centered in the upper right portion of the image.

"Water and Nurture" Through Mentorships

Start before semester begins!

- ❖ Email all students - Email addresses found in Howdy and Canvas!
- ❖ All About Me Page
- ❖ Why ? - Know them, Names, Faces
- ❖ Share with peer mentor, use as conversation starter

One on Ones - Peer Mentor and Instructor

- ❖ Calendly
- ❖ Make appointment - Where do you find instructor story!
- ❖ All About Me

ALL ABOUT ME

Name: _____

Preferred First Name: _____

Name Pronunciation (EX: Lisa (LESA), Whittlesey (whit tel see) _____

Preferred Pronouns: _____

Birthday: _____

Hometown (& any significant previous cities/countries): _____

Cell number: _____ Is it okay if instructor/peer mentor texts you at this #? YES NO

E-mail address: _____

Do you live on or off-campus?: _____ Lisa A. Whittlesey (lisa.whittlesey@agnet.tamu.edu) is signed in

Major and Career Goals: _____

What do you like to do for fun (hobbies, activities, etc)? _____

Person(s) you most admire and why: _____

Favorite song (something clean that could be played in class!): _____

Three things that make you smile/feel less stressed:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three things you hope to learn/get out of this class:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are you most nervous about as you begin your first year at Texas A&M?

Would you provide a picture of YOU on this page! Save as a PDF and [send](#) back to me!

❖ Private check in/Attendance
Red light, Yellow light, Green light

❖ Intentional follow up - instructor and peer mentor

❖ Group Activities - Developing Peer Relationships
Speed Dating - Q & A with all in class- Chat packs
Small groups - YELP reviews, Life Maps
Outside class - Whittlesey dinners, Corn Maze,
Yell practice, & more



- Peer mentor - important campus apps/tools, how to use canvas, how to use different calendars!
- Instructor - Weekly email - Same day/same time, preload into Canvas, review class, things happening next week and sharing important dates/events
- Get them used to interacting with Canvas!



A stylized, colorful illustration of a landscape. The foreground features rolling green hills with dark brown soil. On the left, there is a green tree, a purple flower, and an orange flower. A small red bird is flying in the sky. The background consists of layered blue and white hills under a blue sky.

Removing Barriers to Success

Group/Table Activity

- ❖ Supplies - Post It notes (yellow, pink/orange, blue/green), pens/pencils
- ❖ It is a BALANCE!
- ❖ How to prioritize your time

Have to Do - yellow

Need to Do - blue/green

Want to Do - pink/orange



Image by Ray Shrewsberry from Pixabay

The background is a stylized landscape. It features rolling green hills in the foreground and middle ground, with a blue sky and white clouds in the background. A red bird is flying in the sky. There are several plants: a green tree, a purple flower, and an orange flower. The text "Connecting with Thriving Role Models" is written in a brown, serif font in the center of the image.

Connecting with Thriving Role Models

Connection with Student Role Models

❖ Peer Mentor - Create upperclassman student panel 6-8 students across different majors in COALS

- Encouraged class to come with questions
- Gave panel some questions to cover:
 - * What do you enjoy most of your major
 - * What organizations, events, programs, or other experiences have been most impactful for you as an Aggie?
 - * What is one thing that you wished that you would have known as a freshman that would have enhanced your Aggie experience?

Connection with Industry Role Models

- Utilize Aggie Network!
- Guest speakers - different agriculture careers & various stages of career expertise
- Connections for students
- Prepare questions, thank you notes

HOW I LIVE LIFE

- If you look at work as a job, you fail. If work doesn't seem like work, it is probably your PURPOSE
- Study your failures, not your successes. If you are focused on your successes, then you learn nothing
- Change is good for the heart, soul, and mind
- Think of leader as a VERB not a noun
- The world aint that small (at all)
 - So, TRAVEL (a lot)...assuming it is safe to do so
- If the "good ol' days are behind you, you are old"
- Marry your best friend (you can thank me later)



DO WHAT
IS RIGHT,
NOT WHAT
IS EASY

- Be respectful and honorable
- Stand firm
- Demonstrate work ethic
- Show patience
- Care for others
- Have fun on the journey
- Value lifelong friendships
- Never stop learning

A stylized, layered landscape illustration. The foreground features rolling green hills with dark brown soil patches. On the left, there is a green tree, a purple flower, and an orange flower. A small red bird is flying in the upper left. The background consists of light blue and white wavy bands representing the sky.

Cultivating a Flourishing Learning Environment

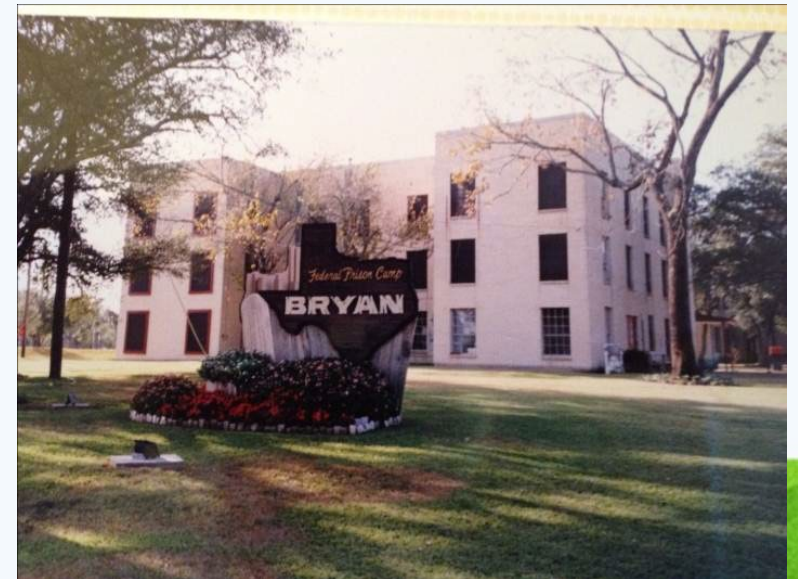


Horticulture behind the prison walls

My teaching experience:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

- Prison teacher
- Junior Master Gardener Program
 - Teaching teachers
 - Teaching employees
 - Teaching volunteers

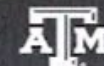


Benefits of nature on human health

- Reduced stress
- Better sleep
- Improved mental health (reduced depression and anxiety)
- Greater happiness, well-being and life satisfaction
- Reduced aggression
- Reduced ADHD symptoms
- Increased prosocial behavior and social connectedness
- Improved immune function
- Improved general health (adults, children, cancer survivors)
- Lower blood pressure
- Improved postoperative recovery
- Improved birth outcomes
- Improved congestive heart failure
- Improved child development
- Improved pain control
- Reduced obesity
- Reduced diabetes
- Better eyesight
- Reduced mortality

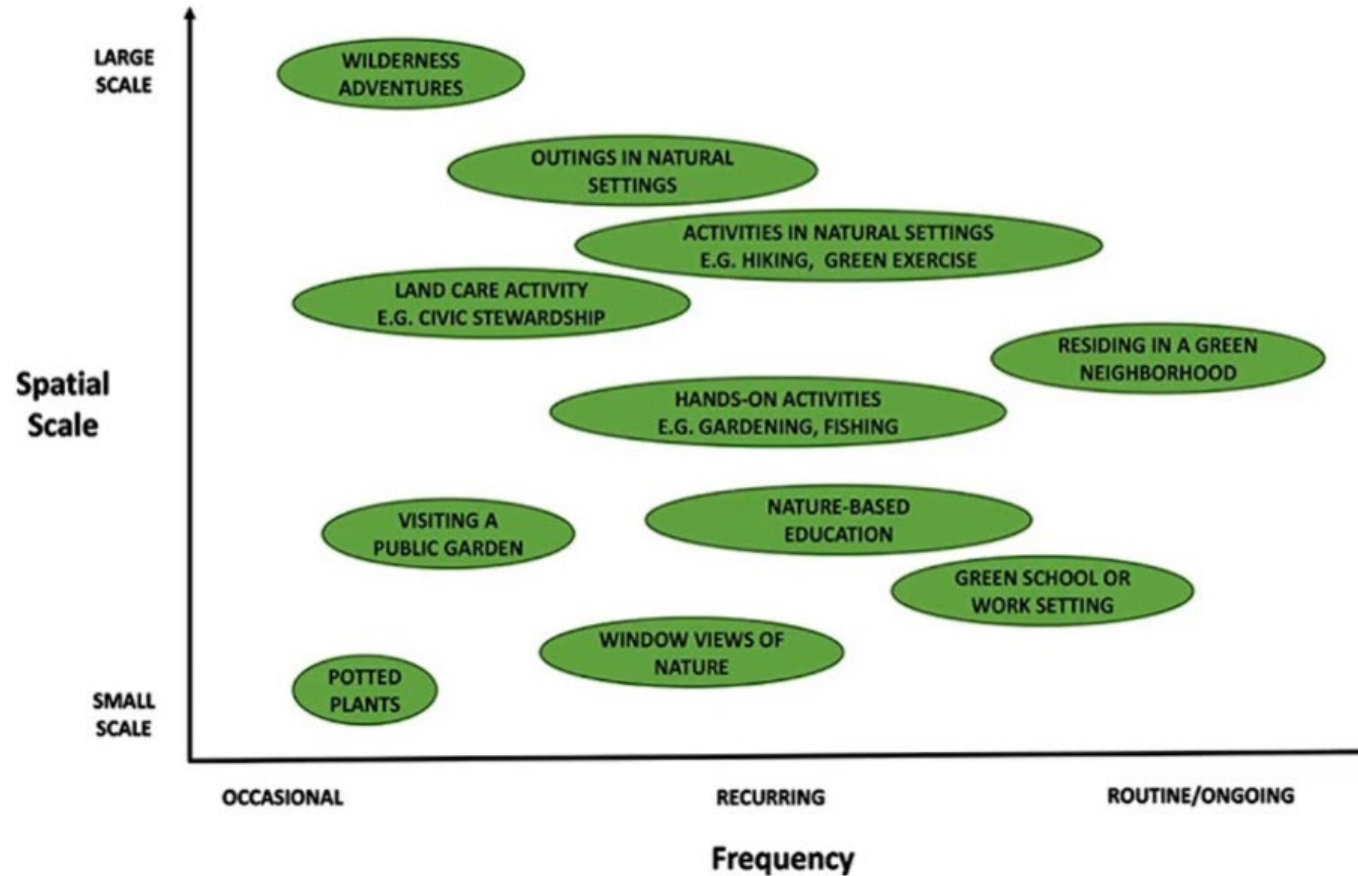
Frumkin et al., 2017

Dr. Jay Maddock - Director, Center for Health and Nature
Presentation for Ellison Lecture Series 2024



PUBLIC HEALTH
TEXAS A&M HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

Spectrum of nature contact



Dr. Jay Maddock - Director, Center for Health and Nature
Presentation for Ellison Lecture Series 2024

Study suggests people in urban areas with more green space have better mental health

February 21, 2024 Ann Kellett, PhD

First-of-its-kind study uses detailed NatureScore database to assess mental health at the neighborhood level



> [Int J Environ Res Public Health](#). 2024 Feb 1;21(2):168. doi: 10.3390/ijerph21020168.

Nature and Mental Health in Urban Texas: A NatureScore-Based Study

Omar M Makram ¹, Alan Pan ², Jay E Maddock ^{1 3}, Bitra A Kash ¹

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 38397658 PMCID: [PMC10887946](#) DOI: [10.3390/ijerph21020168](#)

Trends for various mental health encounters decreased as NatureScore of neighborhood increased.

NatureScores over 60 had about 50% lower rate of mental health encounters!





My garden, my refuge!

Encourage your students to get outside!

My wellness & mental health class is in the garden!



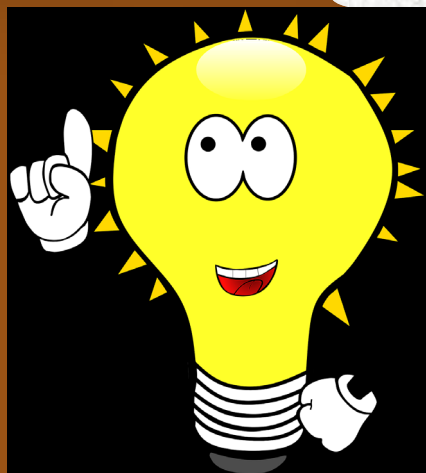


Image by Christian Dorn from Pixabay

- Class Meals
- TAMU Garden Tour & Propagation
- 42 Domino night
- Corn Maze
- SINGO - Stage 12
- Tour Association of Former Students



As a wrap up!.....

Soil and Compost (It happens!)



- Soil is made through circumstances
- Soil is a combination of death and life, improves structure
- Life and Loss matter - The "messy" parts can help us to get our soil ready. Opens up opportunity to talk and share!
- Cultivate a space to help others to grow

Life Cycle of a Plant



Seeds to Seeds

Roots
Stems
Leaves
Flowers
Fruits
Seeds

LIGHT

- Plants flower more in the sun!
- Less disease in the sun!
- We are in a field of flowers -
DON'T GO IT ALONE!
- We "see" better with light! -
Illuminate problems! Ask for HELP!





Growth, Pruning, and deadheading!

- Have you been pruned lately?
- Pruning directs growth
- More stems, more leaves!

Thin branches, thin fruit!



Are you or your students trying to hold too many branches?

Too much fruit can break branches!

Bad Bugs!



Good Bugs!

Be able to recognize Good vs Bad

Bad Bugs- SUCK THE LIFE OUT OF YOU!

- Squish them
- Don't make the environment right for them 😊

Plants Flower and then Fruit

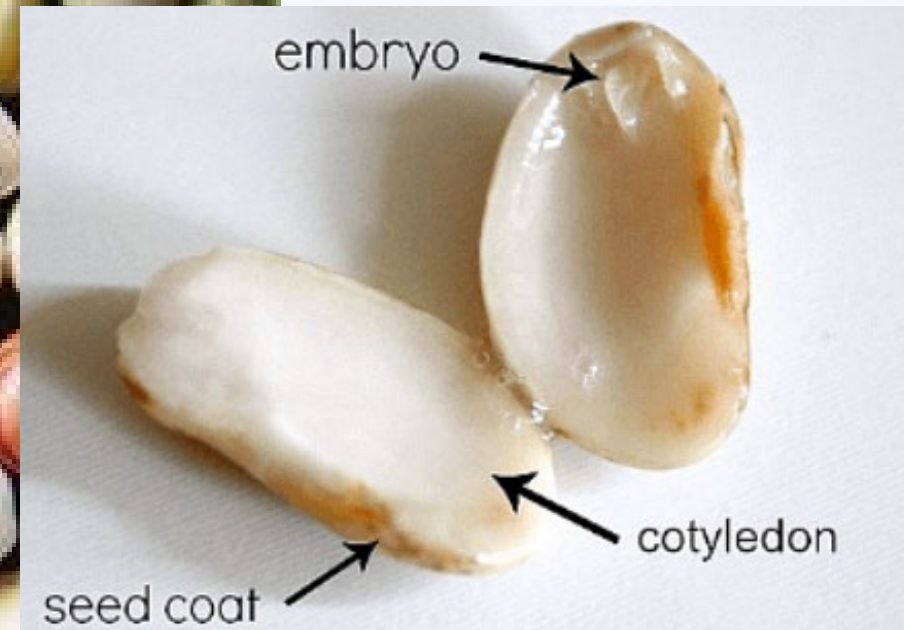
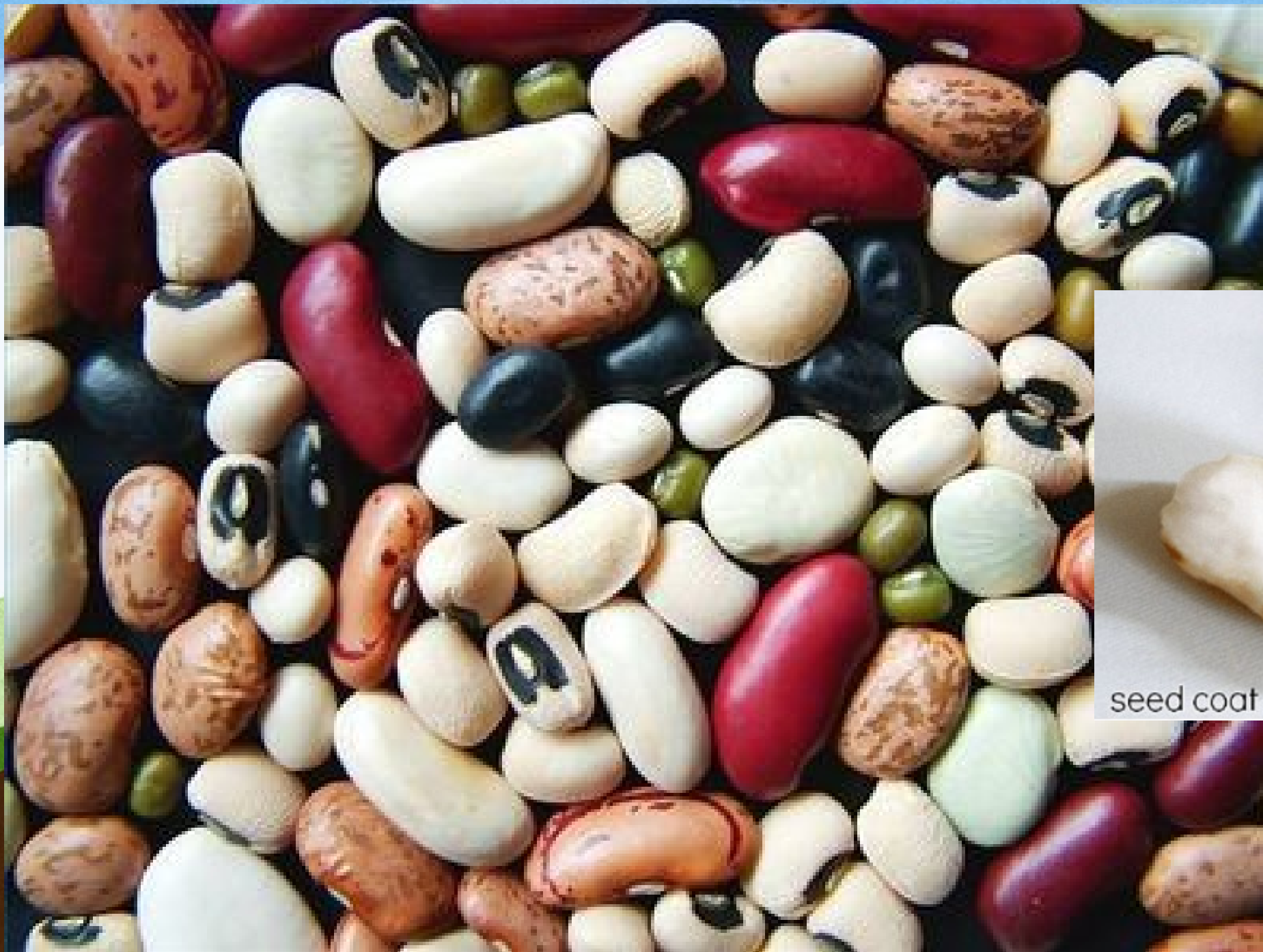


Plants are made to flower and produce fruit!.... So are people!

There can be lots of time from planting to harvest 😊



In Every SEED





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