Plant Hybrids Helping the Planet

Students will invent their own plant hybrid and identify how it can benefit the world, while learning about the wonderful world of horticulture—and the green-collar careers they may someday enjoy!

**OBJECTIVE**

✔ Understand what a plant hybrid is
✔ Learn how hybrids can be used to benefit society
✔ Learn how to research plant species

**TIME REQUIRED**

Part A: Approx. 60 min.
Part B: Approx. 20 min.

**MATERIALS**

Part A
✔ The Surprising World of Horticulture poster
✔ Make Hybrid Connections activity sheet (optional)
✔ Plant Mash-Up contest entry form and rubric

Part B
✔ Horticulture careers poster
✔ Green-Collar Careers magazine
✔ Green Thumb printable board game

**PART A: PLANT HYBRIDS**

1. Introduce students to the term horticulture: the art, science, technology, and business of growing plants. Ask them why they think horticulture is important and how it relates to them. Answers may include: Plants provide the food we eat, protect the health of our bodies and the environment, and form the landscapes we live and play in. Show and discuss The Surprising World of Horticulture poster.

2. Explain that some horticulturists are scientists who create plant hybrids by combining two different plant varieties. The resulting plant offspring has valued trait(s) from each plant. Ask volunteers to guess why plant hybrids are useful. To expand on the topic, offer these facts:

   ✔ Plant hybrids are produced for specific benefits, such as the ability to resist insects or diseases, endure extreme weather, and solve environmental challenges like pollution and erosion.

   ✔ Hybrids can help scientists develop new medicines.

   ✔ Scientists very carefully select plants to cross-pollinate to create a hybrid. They look for traits in one plant that might benefit another. They often pollinate these plants by hand.

3. Have students identify the settings where hybrid plants may be relevant. Answers may include: gardens, deserts, and riverbanks, as well as the medical and construction industries. Point out that biologists and botanists have the opportunity to be inventors, with the goal of developing hybrids that benefit the world. Discuss hybrids that students might want to see in the world using the following prompts: hybrid plants that provide new medicinal solutions, improved air purification, and drought tolerance; attract more pollinators; or have interesting colors, distinctive scents, or delicious flavors.

**PART B: GREEN-COLLAR CAREERS**

1. Tell students that horticulture professionals work within the green-collar industry to improve

Enter the Plant Mash-Up Contest!

Chance to win $1,500! • Deadline: 3/1/21

Upload scans of your class’s hybrids at scholastic.com/bloom/contest or email them to: scholasticsubmissions@scholastic.com or mail them to: Scholastic Inc., Plant Mash-Up Contest Attn: Space 3-226 (SNP) 557 Broadway New York, NY 10012
For full rules and prize details, visit scholastic.com/bloom/contest.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. Void where prohibited. Eligibility: Contest is open only to students in grades 6–8 in a public, private, or home school in the 50 US (or DC) that is in compliance with the laws and regulations of its state/district and who are residents of the above. Only the student’s teacher, youth program leader, or student’s parent/legal guardian may submit an entry on the student’s behalf. Entry period: Entries must be submitted between 12:01 a.m. EST on 1/12/21, and 11:59 p.m. EST on 3/1/21. To enter digitally: Visit scholastic.com/bloom. To enter by email: Email the entry to scholasticsubmissions@scholastic.com. To enter by mail: Mail entries to Scholastic Inc., Plant Mash-Up Contest, Attn: Space 3-226 (SNP); 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Mailed entries must be postmarked by 3/1/21, and received by 3/12/21. Prizes: Swepstakes, one (1) randomly selected student will receive a $100 Visa Gift Card (ARV $100), their teacher (or submitting adult) will receive a $500 Visa Gift Card (ARV $500). One (1) Runner-up student will receive a $250 Visa Gift Card (ARV $250), and their teacher (or submitting adult) will receive a $1,000 Visa Gift Card (ARV $1,000). One (1) Grand Prize student will receive a $500 Visa Gift Card (ARV $500), and their teacher (or submitting adult) will receive a $1,500 Visa Gift Card (ARV $1,500).

everyday life and to address problems such as pollution, land erosion, and air quality. Show and discuss the horticulture careers poster. Horticulture professionals grow food, beautify our environment and enhance our lives with parks and gardens, improve our physical and emotional health, and support athletics with safer natural playing fields.

2 Distribute the Green-Collar Careers magazine. After students have digested the profiles, ask students to discuss in small groups: Which of these horticulture careers appeals to you most? Why? What kind of education would you need for that career? What surprised you most in the magazine?

3 Divide students into small groups. Distribute the Green Thumb board game, trivia cards, and instructions. When students are done playing, challenge them to share a few pieces of trivia they learned.
THE SURPRISING WORLD of
HORTICULTURE
How plants power our lives in innovative ways

Drones & Robots help us GROW PLANTS

Beauty
Plant-based cosmetics are one of the fastest-growing segments of the beauty industry

Technology
People only eat roughly 2.5% of the edible plants in the world.

Environment
Simply looking at flowers and nature can improve your mood.

Art & Design
Ornamental Horticulture has been proven to reduce stress, improve memory, and speed healing.

Food
More trees – less pollution.

Health & Wellness
1 tree can scrub 48 lbs of CO₂ from the air each year.

Fashion
20% more likely to believe in others or artificial turf vs. natural grass

Sports
Athletes

Science
Spinach is being used in experiments to engineer human tissue.

Jobs
39% of the annual horticulture job openings are unfilled due to lack of qualified applicants.

Economy
Horticulture contributes $196 billion to the U.S. economy (annually).

Goodbye drought, starvation and cancer!
**Landscape Architect**
Designs outdoor spaces for homes, cities, and businesses. Trained in horticulture, urban planning, and architectural practices.

**Urban Forester**
Works for a city or company to keep trees trimmed and healthy. Provides urban trees with the special maintenance they need.

**Florist**
Brings beauty and delight to people. Designs and creates floral arrangements for many occasions.

**Hydroponics Specialist**
Grows plants in liquid without soil—so the plants can stay free of all soil diseases!

**Drone Pilot**
On the cutting edge of tech! Navigates drones to manage and grow plants in fields and forests.

**Botanist**
The ultimate expert on plant biology. Studies the power of plants and teaches, conducts research, or advises businesses.

**Greenhouse Grower**
Grows food and other plants in the controlled atmosphere of a greenhouse—no need to battle the weather!

**Natural Lands Manager**
Manages, protects, and conserves our lands, streams, and wetlands. Works with others to ensure a healthy future for Earth.
Earth is home to more than 390,000 plant species! They have specific traits, many of which are useful in a plant hybrid. Imagine that you are a horticulture professional traveling the world to research amazing plants and their flowers and fruits. Record the characteristics of four unique plants in the space below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region/location:</td>
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<td>Climate and habitat:</td>
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<td>Characteristics:</td>
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<td>How could this plant be used in a hybrid to solve a problem or social need?</td>
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Plant Mash-Up!

**INSTRUCTIONS** Consider the characteristics of two existing plants and use them to create your own plant mash-up with new qualities. You can use any plant you can think of, but here are some to get you started. Make sure your final thoughts all fit on this page!

### Bamboo
- Strong and lightweight building material
- Spreads quickly and helps prevent soil erosion
- Bamboo shoots provide food for animals and humans

### Aloe Vera
- Sap is healing to human skin
- Requires little water but needs warm weather to thrive
- Juice is nutritious and packed with vitamins and minerals

### Water Lily
- Helps to purify water by absorbing pollutants through roots and leaves
- Produces beautiful flowers and distinctive pads
- Lily pads provide food for small animals as well as shelter for fish

### Dendrobium Orchid
- Cane-like stems with papery green leaves and beautiful flowers
- Filters air of pollutants
- Takes in carbon dioxide; releases oxygen at night

### Red Clover
- Deep roots make it drought tolerant and helps control soil erosion
- Tasty and nutritious food source for humans
- Attracts pollinators, especially bumblebees

### Lemon Tree
- Flavorful fruit is a rich source of vitamin C
- Juice from the fruit is antibacterial and an excellent cleaning agent
- Essential oil used in aromatherapy for stress relief

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**Name the two plants you are combining:**

1. ________________ 2. ________________

**Name the challenge:**

______________________

**Illustrate your hybrid below:**

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**In the space below, describe the features of your hybrid and how it will help your community.**

______________________

______________________

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**Student Name:** __________________________________________  **Student Grade:** _______________________________________

**Teacher Name:** __________________________________________  **Teacher Email:** ________________________________________

**School Name:** __________________________________________  **School Address:** ______________________________________

**School City/State/Zip:** __________________________________
Horticulture is the art, science, technology, and business of plants. Look inside to explore this field and the careers it offers.

PLUS: Hear from professionals about what they do and why they love it.
Today’s job market is an ever-changing place. Tomorrow’s will be, too. But certain industries remain healthy and continue to create good jobs. One of these is the green-collar industry, aka horticulture. Plants are all around us, and passionate professionals are needed to keep it that way. This industry promises to provide careers for years to come.

Planting Goodness for Communities and for the Planet

It takes a lot of work to put food on our tables, and a wide variety of professionals make that happen. Growers plant, tend, and harvest food in many settings, from large farms to cutting-edge greenhouses and even hydroponic labs. Food inspectors—both public and private—make sure food is clean and safe before it reaches our tables. Scientists work to develop plants that are more nutritious and more efficient and easier to grow than in the past.

Growing food is a hot area for innovation in the green-collar industry. Entrepreneurs are developing vertical farms that can be built in cities, delivering fresh food to local families and businesses. Some of these facilities rely on cutting-edge hydroponic—soil-free—technology to produce food quickly and efficiently. These tech-savvy workers might spend their mornings reprogramming a bank of carefully timed lights and their afternoons delivering fresh food to local chefs. Other 21st-century green-collar pros might be drone specialists who know how to fly a drone to conduct a survey of a field or forest.

Preserving natural habitats is another line of work that will continue to employ green professionals for many years. These pros take care of trees, maintain our landscapes, and even sometimes build entire ecosystems from scratch. They have training in botany, plant sciences, and other similar fields. Forestry experts help manage forests, harvesting and replanting trees when needed. Grassland experts often work in prairies, conducting controlled burns to simulate the ecologically necessary effects of small wildfires. Arborists treat trees for invasive species, striving to save populations of hemlock, pine, and other threatened trees and the many animals and plants that rely on them.

Imagining and designing landscapes is done by professionals such as landscape architects and urban planners. These experts are trained in multiple disciplines. They understand how to integrate the plant world with the built-up world—providing not just beauty to our cities but also greenery that improves our mental health. Landscape architects know

Wait, What?!

Scientists are exploring the use of spinach to grow vascular tissue for human organ replacements.

Seriously?!?

Cities with lots of green space may have less crime than cities without.
Well, That Makes Sense:

Researchers have found that being around nature lowers stress levels and reduces anxiety. Hospital patients with access to greenery have shorter stays and lower heart rates.

Good to Know!

Urban greenery also helps businesses—improving property values, boosting occupancy rates in rental real estate, and helping to create jobs.
We talked to two young professionals who are keepin’ it green in horticulture careers

**Name:** Nicole Sherry  
**Title:** Head Groundskeeper, Baltimore Orioles  
**Education:** B.A. degree in agriculture (with a minor in horticulture); Applied Agricultural Associates degree

Tell us about what you do. My daily routine usually starts with observation, labor, adapting, and learning about grass and soil and weather. It ends with the challenge of facilitating a baseball game through to the finish.

What inspired you to work in horticulture? The inspiration started by being fascinated by how certain plants could adapt to adverse conditions. For instance, how certain seedpods can only release their seeds to establish new life from fire.

What is your favorite thing about your work? I learn something new about science, grass, and weather every day. I also get to be a hidden part of the baseball game by providing an optimal surface for our Orioles to play on.

What was the best surprise you encountered in the industry? The biggest surprise was that my love for plant science and the game of baseball could be combined.

Why do you think horticultural work is important for the world? Learning about plants can help us in so many aspects of life—nourishment, mental health, and environmental health.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about entering the profession? Keep an open mind that is always ready to adjust because science is constantly changing.

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**Name:** Josh Guy  
**Title:** Trials Manager  
**Education:** B.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences

Tell us about what you do. As Trials Manager for Handpicked Vegetables, I work to plan, grow, and test new vegetable varieties. I get to test both in the hydroponics lab and outside in the garden.

What is your favorite thing about your work? No two days are exactly alike. I love the ability to transition between indoor and outdoor work.

What was the best surprise you encountered in the industry? There is a sense of camaraderie and cooperation. While competition can be fierce, the level of respect and friendliness I’ve encountered is unmatched.

Why do you think horticultural work is important for the world? Horticulture provides a great deal of the diversity in food options. A world without the huge array of fruits and vegetables would leave us with some pretty boring dinner plates.
### Roughly how many plant species are there on earth? (Get within 50,000 species.)

**Answer:** 400,000

### Horticulture is the art, science, technology, and business of _______.

**Answer:** growing plants

### Plants hold soil in place, helping to prevent which phenomenon?

**Answer:** erosion

### What is the process in which plants convert light into energy?

**Answer:** photosynthesis

### A scientist who studies plant biology is called a _______.

A. botanist  
B. zoologist  
C. physicist

**Answer:** A. botanist

### Plants play a major role in keeping the atmosphere in balance by absorbing which gas?

**Answer:** carbon dioxide

### Which part of a plant performs most of its photosynthesis?

A. roots  
B. stem  
C. leaf

**Answer:** C. leaf

### Plants help people breathe by releasing which gas?

**Answer:** oxygen

### Plants hold soil in place, helping to prevent which phenomenon?

**Answer:** erosion

### Knowing what an arborist does, what do you think is the main feature of an arboretum?

**Answer:** trees

### A plant that completes its life cycle in one year or less is called a(n) _______.

A. annual  
B. perennial  
C. conifer

**Answer:** A. annual

### A botanical garden that is open year-round will likely use what kind of building to grow plants in the winter?

**Answer:** greenhouse

### The pistil and stamen are contained in which part of a plant?

A. seed  
B. flower  
C. stem

**Answer:** B. flower

### Urban foresters often work closely with utility companies because trees sometimes grow into _______.

**Answer:** power lines

### One of the best ways to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is to ensure that the planet has healthy _______.

**Answer:** forests

### The part of a plant that is usually belowground is known as the _______.

**Answer:** root

### Lining waterways with plants helps _______ water pollution.

A. add to  
B. reduce  
C. remove

**Answer:** B. reduce

### A plant that is not native to a region and causes ecological or economical harm is known as a(n) _______.

**Answer:** invasive species
**HOW TO PLAY**

**Aim:** Reach one of the career tiles at the center of the board. The first person to land a job wins!

**Players:** 2–4

**Materials Required:**
- Game board
- Printable trivia cards
- 1 die
- Different place markers for each player (e.g., paper clips, coins, buttons, etc.)
- Download the game board and trivia cards at [scholastic.com/bloom](http://scholastic.com/bloom)

**GETTING SET UP**

1. Each player begins at one of the four starting spots: In the Lab, Out in Nature, At the Drawing Board, or Behind a Drone.
2. Each player rolls the die one time. The player with the highest roll goes first and play continues clockwise.
3. The first player rolls the die and moves her place marker the corresponding number of spaces.

**GAME PLAY**

- If the player lands on a blank space, she takes no action. The next player rolls.
- If the player lands on a positive action or circumstance related to her career path, she **moves ahead one space**. Once she has moved, the next player rolls.
- If the player lands on a negative action or circumstance related to her career path, she **moves backward one space**. Once she has moved, the next player rolls.
- If the player lands on a **Green Thumb**, the player to the right will pick up a Green Thumb trivia card from the pile and ask the trivia question. If the player gets the question right, she moves forward one space. If the player gets it wrong, she takes no action. After the question is asked, the trivia card can be placed in a discard pile. Once the player has answered the question and moved (if necessary), the next player rolls.
- If the player lands on a **Career Change**, she moves her place marker to the starting point that corresponds to the color of the Career Change flower she landed on. For example, if the player lands on a pink Career Change flower, she moves her place marker to the pink starting tile: In the Lab.

**MOVE TO WIN**

Play continues until one person reaches one of the four **career tiles**: Drone Engineer, Landscape Architect, Botanist, or Urban Forester.