

COTTONWOODS VS. TAMARISK

Overview

After teaching students about riparian areas and invasive tamarisk, test students' knowledge with a true or false running game.

This game can be modified to be any species depending on your region and natural inhabitants.

Time

15 minutes or more depending on number of true or false questions

Grades

K-8

Materials

Cones, buckets, or natural landmarks to designate the playing area

Set Up

- Divide the class into two teams. Line the teams up to face one another, leaving about ten feet in between the teams.
- Designate one group as "tamarisk" and the other group "cottonwoods."
- Using buckets, cones, or landmarks, announce that each team has an out of bounds area where they cannot be tagged.

Playing the Game

- Tell the students that you will be giving them a series of true or false statements. The students will have to decide for themselves whether or not that statement is true or false.
- If the statement is true, the students on team cottonwood will try to tag students on team tamarisk. Tamarisk must run into their out of bounds area before they are tagged by a cottonwood. Any tamarisk that are tagged before crossing into their safe area must join the cottonwood team.
- If a statement is false, the tamarisk students try to tag the cottonwoods before the cottonwoods reach their safe zone. If cottonwoods get tagged during a false statement, they become tamarisk in the next round.
- Some questions may be confusing to think about in this context and students will inevitably end up running in both directions. Let them get confused and chaotic before giving them hints and revealing the answer.
- Regroup after each round to review the answer and discuss with students why the correct answer was true or false.

True or False Questions

Below are a few examples of true or false questions—these will vary depending on what you have taught in class.

- Riparian is another word for riverside (TRUE)
- An invasive plant is a good plant that helps the environment (FALSE) [*Invasive means that it causes harm*]
- Tamarisk can block access to popular campsites and recreation areas (TRUE)
- Tamarisk are native to the United States (FALSE) [*They are invasive, non-native plants from Eurasia*]
- Invasive plants invade riparian habitat and impact wildlife habitat (TRUE)
- Each tamarisk plant can produce up to 1,000 seeds a year (FALSE) [*Tamarisk plants produce around 500,000 per year*]
- Tamarisk does not resprout quickly after fire (FALSE) [*Tamarisk can re-sprout 6-9 feet in the first year after fire*]
- Tamarisk can survive in saltier soils (TRUE)
- The tamarisk beetle was introduced as a method for controlling tamarisk (TRUE)
- Cottonwoods are an invasive species that crowd out tamarisk (FALSE) [*Cottonwoods are native plants to the U.S.*]
- Tamarisk was brought over from South America (FALSE) [*Eurasia and Northern Africa*]
- Russian olive is also an invasive, non-native plant (TRUE)

* Refer to the *Riparian Areas and Invasive Species Resource* for background information.

