

Dendrology Presentation Assignment

Goals

The primary goals of this assignment are:

1. To learn about the identification, ecology, range, silvics, and uses of important woody species in North America not native to east Texas.
2. To improve your ability to give an interesting and informative presentation.

Description

You will create an 8-minute presentation that covers species from North America. Everyone will select their species via a lottery. All grading will be on an individual basis. To be fair, draft PowerPoints are due for everyone no later than 11:00am, Thursday, 10/24. Turn in PowerPoints by email (stovalljp@sfasu.edu), in the drop box on Brightspace D2L, or bring them on a USB drive to lecture.

Presentation Format

The overarching goal of your presentation should be to have your classmates walk out of the room after your presentation with a greater knowledge and understanding your assigned species. Anything within reason and good taste you can do to make your presentation more memorable is a plus. You should cover the silvics, ecology, range, and how to identify each species you cover. Include interesting stories about some of the more engaging species. If you are interested in wildlife, cover wildlife uses. If you are interested in timber, cover silviculture and forest products. If you are teaching a conifer, we may have cones you can pass around to your classmates (although this won't count for your creativity points). You can use whatever kind of PowerPoint, handouts, or audiovisual aids that we can practically employ. If you use PowerPoint, I require that you provide me a digital copy at the beginning of the class you present in so that I can post it to the course website for your classmates.

Doing well on this assignment will involve considerable effort in research, planning, and rehearsing your presentation. If you try to 'wing it' it will not go well for you.

Each individual is required to schedule a practice presentation with me.

I'll post schedules with multiple available times later in the semester. Sign-up for each time-slot will be on a first come first served basis. We'll meet for about 15 minutes, and you will present your draft presentation to me. I will make comments and give them to you in writing. The purpose of this is 1) to allow you to practice, 2) to improve the quality and style of your talk, and 3) to ensure that your information is both accurate and sufficient so you receive a good grade. The practice presentation will not impact your grade unless you fail to do a practice presentation.

The Creativity Points

The intent of the creativity points (20%) is to force you to do something that will make at least one of your species more memorable. You do not need to do a creative exercise for all species, one will earn you full credit. There are really no limits on what this can be, if it is appropriate for the classroom. Past examples include worksheets, competitions, forest products (but please don't bring in a wood sample from Mr. Boyette, everyone will see those in his class anyway), arts & crafts, food, songs, etc. If what you do helps the class remember one of your species better, it counts. It must be something beyond the power point, and no credit is given for cones of conifers (since we have those, but no hardwood fruits, it would be unfair to folks who get hardwood species).

Other things to consider when planning your presentation

The most important thing to remember when planning a presentation is that it really doesn't matter exactly what you say during a talk. What matters is what your audience takes away from your talk. Focus on things about your species that interest you, anecdotes, or stories that will help us remember each tree. If you only list morphological details like "leaves are 1.5 to 3.5 inches long," the audience will have a hard time remembering much about your species. For that matter you likely won't remember how long the leaves are an hour after your talk. Focus on stories, using pictures where appropriate.

Powerpoint Criteria (*you are not required to use powerpoint, but if you do, follow these guidelines*)

- Include a title slide with your name, the date, and your species, at a minimum.
- Include the name (common, scientific, or both) of the species in question on each slide, to help your classmates follow along.
- DO NOT USE A POWERPOINT TEMPLATE. This will make it much more difficult for me to upload the slides for your classmates. Please stick to the boring old default similar to what I use in lecture. If you want to present with a template, please turn in another version without the template.
- Don't cover your slides in too much text. A powerpoint should highlight your main points. You should almost never read verbatim from a slide. One rule of thumb for the *maximum* amount of text on a slide is 7 bullets with 7 words each.
- Make sure any photos or maps are big enough to read and are of high enough quality that they are not too pixelated. Make sure text is as big as will fit neatly.
- Make sure any maps or graphics are as simple as possible while still making your point. Too much extraneous text or information can confuse people.

- You are in control of the lighting in the room. If it is too bright to see your photos, feel free to turn some more lights off.

Things to avoid

- Most conifers look like Christmas trees. Unless your species is commonly used as a Christmas tree, don't say 'It looks like a Christmas tree'
- Just because you see something on one single photo does not mean it is a universal truth. For instance, if you find a photo of a tree with drooping branches, do not say that the whole species has drooping branches. Double check this fact in a reliable source.
- Most trees have a wide crown when grown in the open, and a narrower crown when grown in a stand where they compete with their neighbors. This impacts crown size and shape as much as the species in many cases.

If public speaking makes you queasy

- Practice, practice, practice, and practice some more.
- Act like you are telling this info to a single good friend. Practice your talk by telling the information to a single good friend. You are aiming for a conversational style, so don't try to memorize anything verbatim. Instead know the main few points you want to hit on each slide, and then talk like you would naturally.
- Slow down. This will make everything easier, will keep you from tripping yourself up, will reduce verbal pauses, and will help your audience follow you.
- Fake it until you make it. If you look confident, people will think you are confident.
- Feel free to interject appropriate humor if it fits your style. It's easier to talk to a friendly audience than a bored one.

Some tips based on past presentations

- Your textbooks, Silvics of North America, and the VT fact sheets are valuable resources for this presentation. Wikipedia is also generally accurate for the purposes of dendrology. Do try to check their information in a reliable source if you use it. You can also find lots of great info on many of the links on the course website.
- If you've got cones or herbarium samples to pass, have someone other than the speaker pass them out. Also try to pass at least two specimens (one down each row) so that people can see them while you are talking about that species, and not 15 minutes later. Work out who will pass what and make sure that person pays attention.
- Make sure you introduce yourselves to the class at the start of the presentation.
- Be consistent with units. I don't care if you use metric or English, but be consistent.
- If you are talking about big trees, give us diameter and not circumference. Foresters are much more comfortable working with diameter. $D = C / 3.14159$

Grading Rubric

Category	Points	100%	90%	80%	70%	60%	<60%
INFORMATION		A+	A	B	C	D	F
Time (minutes)	15	7:30-8:30	>8:30 < 7:30		>9 <7		>9:30 <6:30
Breadth of Info	10	Cover's all info		Missing minor content			Missing major content
Accuracy of Info	10	Accurate coverage		Minor errors	Several errors	Major errors	Erroneous, superficial coverage
Organization	5	Well Organized		Out of place, lack of flow		Poorly organized	What?
Interesting	10	The class is engaged			Half the class is asleep		Even Stovall is asleep
STYLE							
Professional appearance & demeanor	5	Appropriate clothing for class, takes it seriously		Looks like they just woke up			Expletive laced slides & clothing
Audiovisual Aid Quality	10	Improves talk, not distracting, neat	Too much text	Minor distractions, typos, etc.	Text too small	Unfixed Practice Errors	Out of order, incomplete, unreadable
Eye contact	5	>60% of time			>40% of time		Staring at slides or reading
Verbal skills	5	Volume and pace appropriate		Minor distracting verbal pauses	Um, uh, er, etc. Too fast		Too quiet, monotone, many verbal pauses
Physical presence	5	Looks natural and comfortable		Some repeated distracting gestures		Standing behind podium	Rocking, distracting mannerisms
Creativity	20	Did anything unique & memorable					No effort beyond powerpoint

OTHER POINT ADJUSTMENTS

- 10 points for each presentation on another day you miss (does not apply to excused absences)
- 5 points each time you are late to another day's presentations
- 10 points each time you disrupt anyone else's presentation (e.g. your phone rings)
- 5+ points for each individual if your draft Powerpoint is significantly under-prepared on the due date