



Looking for Lichens

Have you ever seen lichens growing on rocks, trees, or other structures? These organisms are known as “composite organisms” because they are made up of two parts: fungi and algae that live together. The algae can *photosynthesize*, or turn light from the sun into energy. The algae share this energy with the fungus that provides it a home.

Lichens don’t have roots, and need just moisture, sunlight, and oxygen to grow. They’re often called “clean air indicators” because they don’t grow well in places with pollution. Many lichens have a burst of growth in the winter, when there is extra moisture in the air.

They’re an important winter food source for some small animals, and squirrels and birds often use “hair lichens” when building their nests.

There are over 14,000 species of lichens all around the world, and 1,200 of these species live in California! There are lichens of all different shapes, sizes, colors, and textures in our area.

How many of these species can you find?

Looking for Lichens: Scavenger Hunt



elegant sunburst lichen



wolf lichen



pixie cup lichen



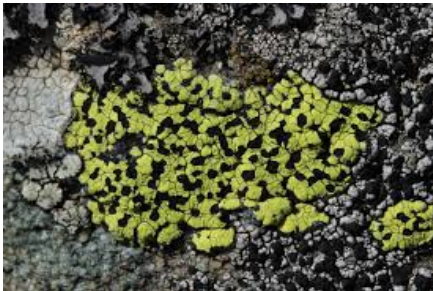
oakmoss lichen



shield lichen



fire-dot lichen



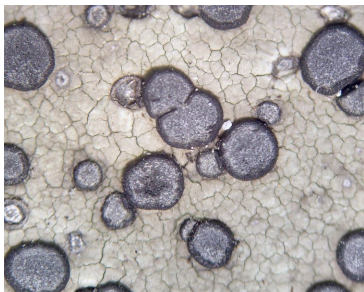
yellow map lichen



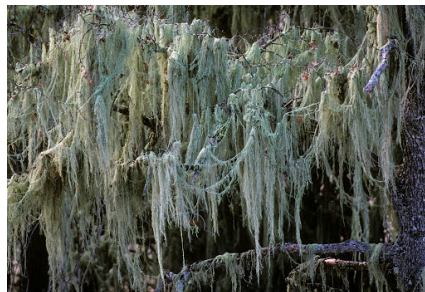
tube lichen



pelt lichen



smoky-eyed boulder lichen



lace lichen
(California's state lichen!)



emery rock tripe lichen

You can upload pictures of the lichens you find to the community science app, iNaturalist, to identify and document them for other scientists to use in research projects around the world!



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