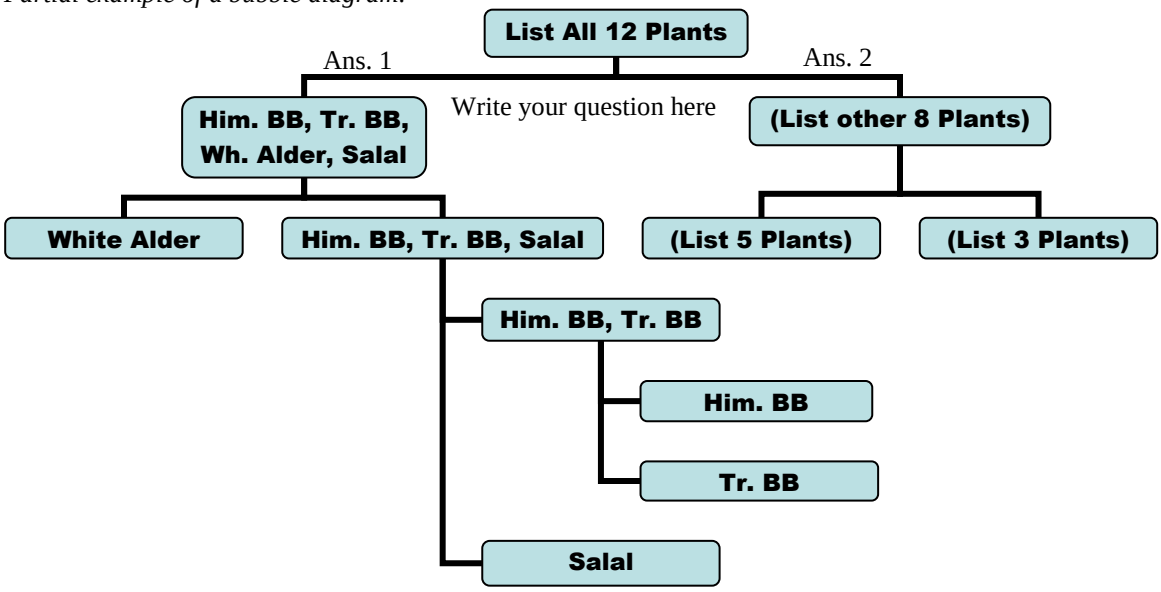
Dichotomous Key

Field Biology

Using the twelve plants that we collected on the scavenger hunt, you will create a dichotomous plant key. A dichotomous key uses a series of questions to successively divide a group of plants (or other organisms) into two groups until a particular species is identified. You may use your completed dichotomous key on the plant quiz.

The first step to making a dichotomous key is to create a "bubble diagram" that shows how you will break your plants into successive groups (as below). Each group should be divided into two sub-groups. Indicate on the bubble diagram which plants are in each group, what questions you will ask to divide your groups, and which answers lead to which sub-group.

Partial example of a bubble diagram:



Your next step is to WORK **INDIVIDUALLY** to turn your diagram into a **formal dichotomous key**. Your key should satisfy the following requirements:

1. Each plant should be identified by a unique series of questions with only TWO answers each.
2. Each plant should be identified by its correct common and scientific name. Scientific names are always written in italics, with the first word capitalized and the second word lower case (for example, *Elymus glaucus*).
3. Questions may be used more than once, in different sections of the key – but they will be used to separate different groups of plants!
4. Each question should be identified by a number or a number and a letter, and the two answers to each question should direct the reader to either a specific plant species or to another question.
5. Your questions should be geared towards the types of visual observations someone might make from a plant specimen in the classroom – and the plant name shouldn't be in the question.
6. Your key should be neatly typed.

Here are some examples of plant keys on-line:

http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/keys/trees/treekey01.html
http://www.botany. hawaii.edu/reefalgae/Redskey201.htm