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| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | Lichens  * Kingdom: Fungi / Protista * Type: Ascolichens |  | |  | | | General Information:  Lichens are a symbiotic organism, that is to say that they are composed of two and even sometimes three different organisms living together in a mutualistic relationship. The relationship is considered mutualism because all the organisms involved benefit from the arrangement. The predominant organism in the lichen is a fungus and plays a key role in the classification of a lichen (Ascolichens are formed primarily from cup fungi - ascomycota). The threadlike fibers of the fungus is able to trap moisture allowing an alga, or cyanobacterium, or both to exist within the moist environment created. The fungus provides the moisture and minerals required by the alga/cyanobacterium and the alga/cyanobacterium provides sugar to the fungus via photosynthesis therefore creating mutualism. The presence of the photosynthetic organism along with minerals harvested by the fungus contributes to the color of the lichen. Lichens are often referred to as pioneer organisms because of their ability to get established on barren surfaces that can not support most other life forms. As they grow across these barren surfaces they help in the process of erosion and the formation of soils that can eventually support less hardy organisms. Lichens are therefore key players in the process of both primary and secondary succession. Lichens can be found in the study area wherever moisture is plentiful. In the winter months lichens can be found almost everywhere in the study area. They are most commonly seen on fallen branches, trunks of trees, and on rocks. | | |  | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | | Copyright © 2008 Amador Valley High. All Rights Reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without express written permission of Amador Valley is prohibited. | |