

Seed Dispersal

If seeds dropped to the floor below the parent plant, that area would be very crowded and plants would be starved of nutrients.

To give new plants the best chance of survival, and also to spread the area in which the species grows, different plants have different methods of seed dispersal.

1. Wind dispersal

Some seeds are carried to new places by wind

These seeds are very light

Orchid seeds, for example are almost as fine as dust.

Some seeds have wings, (sycamore, hornbeam, elm, maple, ash and lime. When the wind blows the wings help the seed to fly away from the tree.

Some seeds have feathery which carry the seeds far away from the parent plants. Dandelion, thistle, wild clematis, will herb, cottongrass and groundsel are all seeds with feathery hairs. The dandelion feathers work like a little parachute to help carry the seed.

2. Water dispersal

Some fruits float, and when they land in water, they can be carried for long distances.

The coconut, for example can travel for thousands of kilometres across seas and oceans.

Mangroves and water lilies also distribute their fruits in water.

3. Animal dispersal

Some plants have juicy fruits that animals like to eat. The animal eats the fruit and digests the juicy part, the rest of the fruit - the seed or the pip - is excreted, sometimes far from the parent plant. Blackberries, cherries, apples, raspberries and strawberries are distributed in this way.

Mistletoe has sticky fruits that stick to birds' beaks. When they rub their beaks clean, they leave the fruit on the bark of trees. Mistletoe is a parasitic plant which makes this a particularly effective method as the fruit is left in exactly the right place!

Hard fruits such as nuts, conkers, acorns and beech seeds are collected by squirrels and sometimes children. These are left - or buried in other places and may be forgotten, so a new plant grows.

Hooks are found on some seeds. They stick to socks and fur of animals. These seeds include: Burdock, wood avens, goosegrass, and agrimony.

4. Explosions

Some plants have pods that explode when they are ripe, shooting out seeds.

These include lupins, gorse, broom, peas, beans and violets

5. Fire

Some seeds will only be released after exposure to the high temperatures of a fire.

Several pine trees disperse seeds in this way.

Complete the table

| Wind Dispersal: | Water Dispersal | Animal | Explosions | Fire |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|------|
| Fine seeds: | | Digested: | | |
| Wings: | | Hooks: | | |
| Feathers: | | Hard: | | |
| | | Sticky: | | |