Guide for Teachers

Seed Spotter Expedition

Activity Description

Discover the amazing variety of seeds. Learn how to be a botanist by observing and recording your findings on an outdoor expedition.

Activity type: Teacher-led activity – outdoors in garden/park

Time needed: 20-30 minutes

Season: Plants produce seeds at different times of year, but late summer/autumn/early winter is often the best time to do this activity.

Children could work individually, or in 2s/3s.

Learning Outcomes

The pupils will learn:

- to look more closely at different seeds,
- to describe in more detail the differences and similarities they see,
- be more able to suggest why seeds look the way they do.

Equipment

This activity requires an outdoor area with different kinds of plants growing. Each child/pair will need a pencil, clipboard and copy of the expedition spotter sheet. Have a selection of envelopes or bags/tubs ready to collect some seed samples. Magnifying glasses or tubs can be useful too.

Activity Introduction

Show the children the area selected for the expedition and explain that botanists are scientists who study plants. Botanists go on expeditions to areas where plants grow to learn more about them. Today the children will be botanists and practise some important skills to do that job: observing seeds closely, asking questions about what they see and collecting some seed samples.

Activity Method

LOOK: Can you find any seeds?

Encourage the children to hunt about for seeds. These may be hanging on the plant or have dropped down onto the ground. If a plant has some dead looking flower petals, it is likely that there are some seeds growing within the old flower, so you could remove the old flower carefully, holding a bag or tub underneath, and the seeds may drop out.

Some common seeds you may spot are pictured on the spotter sheet:

dandelion seed head	sycamore seeds	acorn	nibbled seed	rowan berries	brambles	hazelnuts	sticky willy seeds	burdock

RECORD: As they find seeds, pupils could tick the spotter sheet. They don't need to find the exact seed in the picture, just a seed that fits the clue written beside the picture.

COLLECT: The pupils collect some sample seeds in tubs or envelopes for follow-up activities. Don't forget to dry seeds out before closing the tub or they might go mouldy.

Follow-up activities

- **OBSERVE**: the seeds carefully using a hand lens/magnifying glass or tub.
- **TALK:** about the similarities and differences between the seeds. Draw two seeds that are very different.
- **THINK:** Plants produces seeds in different shapes so that they can be spread about easily. Can the children suggest different ways in which their seeds might be spread about? Are some of them good at flying? Rolling? Sticking onto animals? Being eaten and deposited in poo by animals? They could design tests to see which flies/rolls the furthest, or which ones stick to jumpers.

Health and Safety

Some of the plants may have sharp thorns or be near stinging nettles. Look out for these and encourage the children to wear long sleeves while investigating. Remind the children that fruit eaten by animals may be poisonous to humans, so they should not eat anything without the permission of the adult in charge.

Next steps

- Learn more about the dandelion lifecycle and lots more in 'The Weird and Wonderful World of Plants' online area (available in Marley's school of Garden Magic on PropaGate Learning)
- Design a seed with Science and Plants for Schools (SAPS)
- Explore woodland fruits and seeds with the Woodland Trust