



What happens to all those fruits and seeds in autumn?

In the autumn lots of plants have fruits and seeds but what happens to them?

Many of them travel away from the plant that made them (the parent plant) but how do they do this?

When the fruits and seeds move away from the plant we talk about **seed dispersal**. Do you know how they move to a new place?

The wind is very helpful.

Seeds that are usually dispersed by the wind have a 'wing' to help them to travel away from their parent plant. Sycamore, maple and elm seeds all have wings.

Poppy seeds are very small. They are scattered from tiny holes in the seed head as the stem of the poppy sways in the wind.

A poppy with seeds.

A poppy seed head.

Dandelions have hundreds of tiny seeds that are fun to blow away! Each tiny seed has a hairy parachute that twirls away on the wind.

A dandelion seed head.

Dandelion seeds.

Animals and people are very helpful, too!

Some fruits with seeds have tiny hooks on them. These hooks cling to the fur of animals or to the clothes of people as they brush past. They are often carried a long way and are then rubbed off or fall off.

The fruit of goosegrass.

Burdock fruit.

Some seeds are hidden in the ground by mice, squirrels or jays. They make little winter stores of fruits and nuts in the ground but then they forget where they've put them so in spring time the seeds start to grow.

Squirrels love to hide acorns!

Birds such as starlings, feed on apples that have fallen from the tree. They eat the seeds but the seeds go right through their bodies and come out unharmed in their droppings. The seeds will grow in the spring.

starling

There are lots of other fruits for birds and small animals to eat in the autumn. All these seeds are carried in their droppings to another place.

Elder berries

This mouse is feeding on blackberries.

Some plants are very clever!

The fruit of Herb Robert is a long capsule. When the seeds inside it are ripe and the fruit is dry and brittle, it bursts open and throws the seeds out like an explosion!

Herb Robert

The yellow flowers of gorse and broom make a fruit called a pod. The pod ripens and splits open with a loud 'pop' and the seeds are shot out of the split pod. They can travel quite a long way!

broom pod

gorse pod

And water helps too.

The large fruit of the water lily float away on the water. When they settle in the mud the seeds grow into new lily plants.

A water lily seed pod.

