

# Seeds

What are special wrapped packages of future plants with coverings designed to protect and then disperse them to suitable habitats? *Seeds!* Some seed coverings are fruits or berries, enticing animals to eat them, after which they discard or eliminate

the seeds. Other seeds travel in the wind, float on water, or hitchhike on animals. Still others are dispersed by animals such as squirrels that store acorns in different caches, inadvertently planting future trees. So look at seeds and discover the ingenious ways nature has designed to disseminate them. After trying these activities, continue

experimenting with seeds at [www.massaudubon.org/go](http://www.massaudubon.org/go).



ready,  
set,

# Go Outside!

## Close Look

Collect berries, fruits, nuts, and other seeds. Spread them out on a table and sort them by size, color, protective covering, how they disperse, and other categories you choose. Look at their coverings with a magnifier or under a microscope. Cut open the berries and fruits to find the seeds inside. How many seeds are there? Do the seeds inside have additional protective covering?

### Parent/Teacher Note







**Skills Learned:** Concepts—habitat, plant physiology, plant adaptations, ecological relationships, seasonal changes, and life cycles

**Skills—**Observation, counting, sorting, and experimentation; forming and testing hypotheses; and comparing results

**Safety Note:** After walking through fields, check your clothing for ticks. If you're exposed to poison ivy, wash your skin and clothing immediately.

## Seed Search

How many of these things can you observe in your backyard or neighborhood?

-  A fruit or berry that could be food for an animal
-  A seed with a very protective covering like a husk, shell, or nut
-  A grass or flower with hundreds of seeds still attached
-  A milkweed or dandelion releasing seeds into the wind
-  A plant with hitchhiker seeds
-  A place where an animal left some remains after eating seeds

## Hitchhikers

Go to an open field that has not recently been mowed; or walk along the edge of a farm field, road, or yard. The grasses and other plants are trying to disperse their seeds before the first big frost. Look for seeds with hooks or barbs designed to attach to the fur or feathers of passing animals and eventually fall off elsewhere, known as hitchhiker seeds. Try these experiments.

**Give a Ride**—Wearing long pants, walk through the grasses and other tall plants. (Light-colored sweatpants and leggings work great, as do high socks pulled over your pant legs.) After a while, look at your legs. Do you see a few hitchhiker seeds? Release the seeds in the same field since they will fare best if they remain in this habitat, but not too close to their parent plants.

**Grow Your Own**—Take home a small variety of the seeds you find. Grow them in soil with periodic watering and see what happens!