

Card matching – Teacher’s answer sheet



The Traveller’s palm has seeds coated in a bright blue fruit. These seeds are dispersed by the ruffed lemur which eat the fruit and excretes the seed elsewhere. The lemur also pollinates the plant – the flower has a tough outer coating which the lemur is strong enough to prize open for a drink of nectar.



The brown coconuts you see in the shops are seeds. When growing they’re covered with a buoyant husk. Coconut palms often grow near water so when the fruits drop the water will carry them away from the parent plant. You could experiment in class by putting a coconut in a bowl of water – it will float!



Many plants (including peas and beans) have seeds in pods which are dispersed by explosion. As the pod gets older it starts to dry out and harden and the pressure inside builds up. Eventually the pod will burst open and the seeds will explode out. Check out the Smithsonian YouTube video in the Useful Links to see exploding seeds in action.



Burdock (and many other plants) have seeds covered in tiny hooks. When mammals brush past the plant the hooks get caught in their fur and the seed is pulled off the parent plant. Eventually the seed will fall off or the animal will scratch it off, usually a good distance away from the parent plant. Your class have probably seen cleavers/stickyweed before – if there’s any growing at the school they could have a go sticking it to their jumpers. In 1941 a Swiss engineer named George de Mestral noticed his dog was covered in burrs after a walk. He looked at them under a microscope and the hooks on the seed helped inspire the invention of Velcro.

Card matching – Teacher's answer sheet



Hummingbirds feed off the sugary nectar that flowers produce. When they dip their long beaks in for a drink, they pick up pollen. Hummingbirds see the red/orange end of the colour spectrum better. Some plants are adapted for hummingbird pollination and have long narrow, flowers – the perfect shape for a long narrow beak!



Many orchid species are highly specialised and have evolved so that only one species can pollinate them. The vanilla orchid is native to Mexico and is pollinated by Melipona bees, also native to Mexico. Vanilla growing anywhere else in the world has to be hand pollinated.



Many species of cactus, including the saguaro, are pollinated by bats. The flowers open at dusk when it's cooler and are a great food source for the nocturnal bats. The flowers are large and white so they're easy to spot in the darkness.



The titan arum has the largest inflorescence in the world (an inflorescence is a group or cluster of flowers), which can be 3m tall. It's purple collar resembles meat and the flower emits a smell like rotting flesh. The flower produces heat which helps the smell travel, attracting pollinators from half a mile away. It is pollinated by carrion flies, which like to feed and lay their eggs on dead meat.