



How seeds are scattered

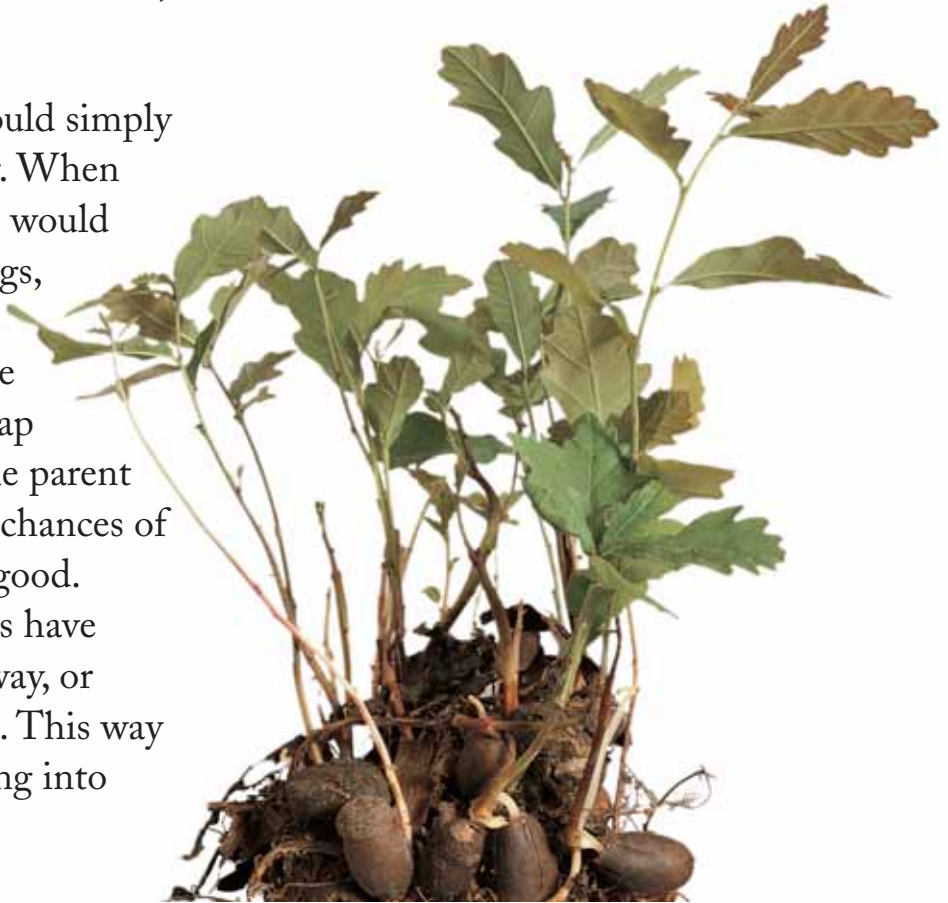
Plants have a range of ways of spreading their seeds. They may use the wind, animals or even water.

If seeds were not scattered they would simply fall to the ground below the flower. When the seeds germinated the seedlings would have to struggle with other seedlings, and with their parent plant, for water and minerals (Picture 1). The leaves of the seedlings would overlap and they would all be shaded by the parent plant. Under these conditions, the chances of any seedling growing well are not good.

To overcome this problem, seeds have developed ways of being carried away, or **DISPERSED**, from the parent plant. This way they have a better chance of growing into healthy plants.

Carried by the wind

Seeds have many ways of being scattered. The smallest seeds are so light that they can be carried by the wind (Picture 2).



▲ (Picture 1) All of these seedlings have to compete for the same water, soil nourishment and light.



◀ (Picture 2) Many seeds use the wind, from the microscopic spores that leave the underside of a mushroom (right), to the delicate parachutes of a dandelion (left).



Scattered by animals

Larger seeds often need the help of animals. Many fruits are brightly coloured and tasty to eat. In this way they attract birds and other animals (Picture 3). For example, squirrels and birds carry acorns from oak trees.

You will remember that seeds have a tough coat, so they are not digested, but pass through the animal unaltered, usually surrounded by a ready-made pile of **NUTRITIOUS** manure.

Some fruits do not attract animals and instead ‘hitch a ride’ (Picture 4). These plants mainly grow low on the ground. Each seed has many hooks on its surface which can attach themselves to fur or feathers until they are rubbed or picked off.

Scattered by the oceans

Some seeds, mainly of certain plants that live beside rivers or on the seashore, can float. These seeds can be carried long distances until they reach some far-off shallow. Coconuts (Picture 5) and mangroves are examples.

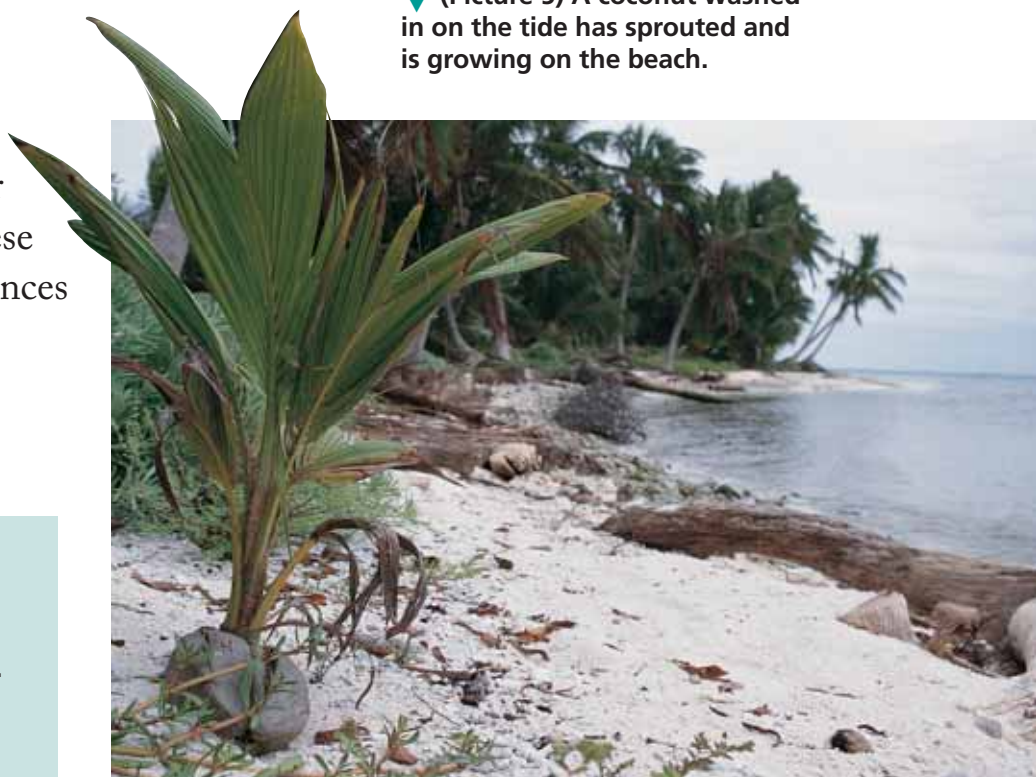


◀ (Picture 3)
The bright red and juicy fruits of the mountain ash (rowan) attract birds.



▶ (Picture 4)
The sharp hooks of the burr clasp onto unaware travellers.

▼ (Picture 5) A coconut washed in on the tide has sprouted and is growing on the beach.



Summary

- Seeds need to be carried from their parent plant.
- Some seeds are carried by the wind.
- Some seeds are carried by animals.
- Some seeds can float on water.