



Science Your Way Texts



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Hi! I know the challenges of elementary education. Fueled by my teaching experience and a desire to help fellow educators, I left the classroom in 2005 and StarrMatica Publishing Group was born. 16 years later, I continue to be a leader in the field of innovative classroom resources. I have a passion for creating STEAM teaching resources to support the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and to help teachers differentiate reading instruction.

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WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF A SQUIRREL BURIES AN ACORN?

SEEDS EVERYWHERE

By Sarah Wassner Flynn

It's a warm summer morning. You wake up and head to your backyard. Something catches your eye. It's a thick, green bush. Plump, dark berries hang in bunches from the ends. It's a blackberry bush! But you did not plant this bush. Your parents did not either. So how did it end up growing in your backyard?

You can probably thank an animal for this new plant. Some animals disperse--or spread--seeds without even realizing it. This happens in different ways, with different animals. New plants grow from these seeds.

Waste Not

One common way for animals to disperse seeds is actually through their waste! Let's say a raccoon finds a blackberry bush in the woods.

It eats the fleshy bits of the fruit, but the seeds in the berries are not digested. Instead, they pass through the raccoon's digestive system and end up in its waste. Eventually, the animal will excrete the seeds. So wherever that raccoon, well, poops, a new plant may grow!

Because wild animals roam around throughout the day, the new plant may grow many miles from the parent plant. You might not have raccoons in your area, but everyone has animals roaming around in their backyards. One of them could have played a role in planting that blackberry bush!



Some birds drop seeds on the ground as they fly around.

Did You Know?



The short-tailed fruit bat can scatter up to 60,000 seeds each night in its waste.

As the largest frugivores (fruit eaters) on the planet, elephants play a major role in spreading seeds. Their waste may contain seeds from more than 70 different tree species! And because elephants walk up to fifteen miles a day, they spread seeds of native plants across long distances.

Fly On

Birds spread seeds through their droppings, in the same way that ground-based animals do. But because some birds fly great distances, they can help plants grow in places even farther away than other animals can take them. In fact, some birds are capable of dispersing seeds more than 100 miles away from the parent plant!

Burying It

Some seeds are spread by accident! Squirrels get acorns from an oak tree and carry their collections to the ground. They may eat some acorns, but they bury

the rest for later. Squirrels are known to forget where they buried some of their acorns. If they are left in the ground, some of those acorns can grow to become new oak trees.

Sticky Situation

Seeds sometimes hitch a ride with animals. Some seeds have hooks or spines on them to help them stick. They can cling to the feathers of birds. They stick to the fur or skin of other animals when they brush past a plant. As the animal wanders around, the seeds are dispersed.



Burrs are seeds with hooks. Can you see the hooks on this burr?

One To Grow On

Certain animals play an important role in seed dispersal. How they do that varies with the animal. It can be through their waste, by dropping the seeds as they roam, or by burying them in the ground. But the results are usually the same: A plant will eventually grow wherever seeds were spread!

Dispersal of Seeds



By Wind



By Animals



By Water



By Bursting



By Humans

*Animals are just one-way seeds are dispersed.
They can also move by wind, water, bursting, and humans.*



WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF A SQUIRREL BURIES AN ACORN?

SEEDS EVERYWHERE

By Sarah Wassner Flynn

You are outside. You see a plant growing. It is a blackberry bush! You did not plant this bush. Your parents did not plant the bush. Why is it in your yard?

You may be able to thank an animal for the bush. Animals spread seeds in different ways. New plants grow from these seeds.

Waste Not

A raccoon is hungry. It eats blackberries in the woods. Its body does not break down seeds. The animal poops out the seeds. From there, a new plant may grow!

Burying It

Squirrels eat nuts from trees. They bury some nuts, too. They forget where they buried some of the nuts. A tree may pop up many months later!

Did You Know?



The short-tailed fruit bat can scatter up to **60,000 seeds each night in its waste.**



Fly On

A bird's body does not break down seeds. It flies around. Its droppings fall to the ground. The seeds land. New plants may grow there.

Some birds drop seeds on the ground as they fly around.

Sticky Situation

Seeds stick to some animals' fur or feathers. The animal moves around, and the seeds fall off. New plants can grow from those seeds!



Burrs are seeds with hooks. Can you see the hooks on this burr?

One To Grow On

Some animals spread seeds through their waste. Some drop seeds from their bodies. Some bury them in the ground. This helps plants grow in new places!

Dispersal of Seeds



By Wind



By Animals



By Water



By Bursting



By Humans

*Animals are just one-way seeds are dispersed.
They can also move by wind, water, bursting, and humans.*



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