

Plants for primary pupils 6



Plants in their natural environment

Plants in their habitats

➔ Teacher Guidance

The activities in this section help children to appreciate that some plants grow better than others in a particular area. The children can question why some seeds never germinate and grow in the place where they land. They then begin to recognise features that may help plants grow, survive and reproduce in their habitat. The children look at different habitats and make comparisons. This encourages them to consider factors that influence which plants grow in the different habitats.

Activity 1: The fight for survival – will it grow?

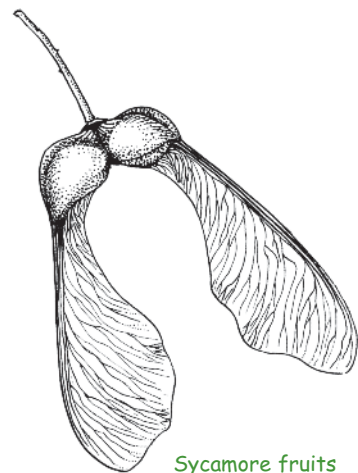
Many plants produce very large numbers of seeds but only a small proportion of these seeds succeed in growing into mature plants. So what happens to all of the seeds? Why don't they grow into mature plants? What problems do seeds and young plants meet in the habitats they grow in? We can call this the 'fight for survival'. This activity helps raise some of the issues involved and encourages children to apply their knowledge of plants and what they need to grow successfully. It can be linked to the activity on page 6 ('Why so many seeds?'), which is suitable for older children, and also to link it to work on dispersal of fruits and seeds (see booklet 3, *Reproduction and life cycles, part 2: Pollination, fertilisation, fruits and seed dispersal*).

This activity can be used to promote discussion about seed germination and growth into healthy plants in different types of terrain. It can be carried out in the classroom or outside in the playground. References to germination and growth of plants can be linked to activities in booklet 4, *Living processes and what plants need to grow*.

Preparation for the activity

Use part of the classroom floor or playground for this activity. Draw a grid on the ground. Label each square, so that there is a mixture of places where plants might be expected to grow well (such as a flower bed or lawn) and places where plants might not be expected to grow well (such as a tarmac path or a paved patio). You can adapt the labels to include familiar places within the school grounds or local area. If you do not want to draw on the ground, you can use large sheets of paper, an old sheet or hoops instead.

You also need something to represent the seeds (approximately 50). Winged fruits of sycamore or ash with their seeds would be ideal, but otherwise you can use about 50 pieces of paper, 1 cm square. If playing outside, use large seeds (such as sunflower) as these can then be eaten by birds.



Sycamore fruits

The activity

Gather the children around the grid. Select one child to be a plant, about to disperse its seeds. The child holds the 'seeds' (e.g. small bits of paper) and throws them up into the air. The children observe where the 'seeds' (bits of paper) go and count the number that land in each area of the grid. Tell the children that any seeds that didn't land on the labelled areas have been eaten by birds or other animals.

The children can then discuss what they think will happen to the seeds that landed in each area and whether they are likely to grow into healthy plants. An important outcome is that the children realise that a lot of the seeds land in places where they are not likely to grow into plants.

