



Seed Dispersal

Fruit are the primary means of seed dispersal in flowering plants. Figures 34 to 37 illustrate different types of seed dispersal. The five main agents of seed dispersal are animals, water, wind, the plant itself (such as when plants "shoot" their seeds out of seed pods) and humans (such as by sowing seeds).

It is important that the seeds be dispersed far from the parent plant. A seed that lands near the parent plant must compete with it for its share of light, nutrients and water. Seed dispersal provides the young plant with a greater chance of survival and, eventually, reproduction.



Figure 34 Birds eat small berries but cannot digest the seeds. They therefore eliminate the whole seeds in their droppings.



Figure 35 Burdock fruits hook onto the fur of mammals that then disperse the fruits and their seeds.



Figure 36 When milkweed pods burst open, they release seeds with long, silky filaments. Even the slightest breeze can carry these seeds far away.



Figure 37 Seeds that fall at the base of the parent plant can be carried far away by waterways and heavy rainfall.