Quick & Easy Habitat Education Activities
Seed Dispersal Hunt
Developed by Heidi Bohan/Starflower Foundation

Descriptions: Students visit the habitat area and use a scavenger hunt form to identify the seed dispersal types of six different seeds. Students consider reasons how seed dispersal types are important for plant survival. This activity is designed to be preceded by the Seed Dispersal Sort activity.

Objectives:
• Students use observation skills to show understanding about characteristics that define seed dispersal types.
• Students see living examples of seeds in the natural habitat area.
• Students use characteristics to describe seeds and their dispersal types.

Print Materials:
• ‘How-to-do Activity: Suggested Plants’
• Master: ‘Seed Dispersal Hunt’

Kit Materials:
• Foam clipboards: 1 per student
• Plant Number Labels: 2 sets of plant labels, each with numbers 1 through 6
• Teacher supplied:
• Copies of ‘Seed Dispersal Hunt’: 1 per student
• Student journal and pencil: 1 per student

Before Activity: Attach ‘Plant Number Labels’ on six plants in the natural habitat area so that all four dispersal types are represented (see ‘How-to-do Activity’ for suggestions). To allow more room for students to study, place a second set of ‘Plant Number Labels’ on plants (ideally the same species) in a different location in the habitat. It is not necessary (though it is desirable) to know the plant names.

Activity:
• Review seed dispersal types (windblown; eaten or chewed; animals carry; falls to earth).
• Organize students into pairs or individually. Pass out ‘Seed Dispersal Hunt’ form to students.
• Say, “Today, you’ll be investigating how plants disperse their seeds. First you’ll find a labeled plant in the habitat area. Then find the seed on the plant and check the box or boxes that correctly describe the seed dispersal type (you can check more than one). You can start anywhere on the form, and with any labeled plant. When you finish, move to another labeled plant and repeat.” Allow 10-15 minutes for students to fill out their form.
• Gather students together. Go to each plant as a group and review what students noticed, “What characteristics identified the seed’s dispersal type?” Ask students to describe (wings, sticky edges, flavor, fluffy and tiny). “Does it have more than one dispersal method?” (e.g., windblown and animal carries; animal eats and falls to earth.) “Does it look like other seeds?” (compare bigleaf maple and vine maple; oceanspray and goatsbeard; black hawthorn and wild rose)
• “Why do you think plants have different dispersal types?” (Any reasonable explanation related to plant growth is acceptable. Some explanations might be: some plants like sunny open areas and need to get away from other plants, some need more room to grow, some like to grow in the shade and fallen leaves of the parent plant, some plants like to grow in open areas, some plants like to grow in big groups.)
• Summarize: “Plants have dispersal types which help them to successfully germinate (sprout) and grow. We can usually determine their dispersal type by looking closely for observable characteristics.”
• Student journals suggested prompts: What are the four different dispersal types? Describe the characteristics of one (or each) dispersal type. Write an expository paragraph about why plants have different dispersal types. Describe one plant and its dispersal type.

Vocabulary
Characteristics: a distinguishing trait or property
Observe: to watch carefully with attention to detail or behaviour with the purpose of arriving at a judgement; to make a scientific observation on or of Observation: an act of noting a fact or occurrence, often involving a measurement, a record or description

Washington State EALRs
Science 1.1 Properties: Understand how characteristics are used to categorize life in living systems. 1.1.6 Understand characteristics of living organisms. Identify observable characteristics of living organisms. 2.1 Develop abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry.
Communication 1: The student uses listening and observation skills to gain understanding.
Reading 1.1 Use word recognition and meaning to read and comprehend text. 1.2 Build vocabulary through reading. 2.1 Comprehend ideas and details.
Science Kit: Plant Growth & Development