

# Animal Seed Dispersal Game

A playful approach to understanding how some trees use animals to disperse their seeds

All

Biodiversity & Interdependence



Many plants exploit the behaviour of animals in order to disperse their seeds. In this playful activity children will learn how **plant biology** has evolved to rely upon squirrels collecting acorns and burying them in the ground. It is a nice confidence building activity for your first steps outdoors and enables you to test the group's ability to regroup when required.

Animals help disperse seeds in other ways too. Many creatures eat the enticing colourful berries offered by plants. The berries are digested and the intact seeds are excreted, contained within their own small pile of fertiliser.

Some fruits and seeds are adapted to have hooks, bristles or sticky secretions so that they can attach to animals' bodies and be mechanically dispersed.

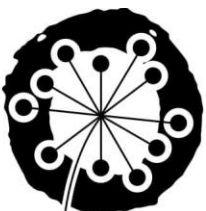
## Equipment

- Raisins \*
- An open space with determined boundaries

## Activity

1. Gather the children together in a circle and explain that it is autumn and they are squirrels preparing for the winter.
2. Give each child five raisins which represent acorns.
3. In nature squirrels will harvest the acorns in autumn and hide many of them as a cache for winter when food is harder to come by.
4. Tell the children that they have five minutes to go and hide their acorns. They can choose if they want to put them all in one place or in different locations.
5. Once the five minutes is up, re-group the children and undertake another activity for at least half an hour.
6. At the end, challenge the children to retrieve their acorn cache for winter. They may not actually find their own, but some ruthless squirrels may find others' acorns instead!
7. Review how many squirrels survived the winter and discuss what has happened to those acorns that have not been retrieved or stolen. i.e. the squirrels have reliably ensured the seeding of new oak trees.

\*Please note that raisins are poisonous to dogs, so choose an alternative resource if your grounds are accessible by dog walkers.



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