

October- Acorns and other seeds

In Autumn you will find many different types of seeds on trees. Seeds are produced so that new plants can grow. Some are found inside soft fruits like blackberries or crab apples which we focused on last month. However, seeds come in many forms. Generally they will be inside of or attached to something that helps them to move away from the plant they are growing on so that they can find their own space to grow. Being inside a fruit attracts animals who eat the seeds. The seeds are then spread in the animal's poo!

Other seeds are light or shaped in a way that they are easily moved by the wind like dandelion seeds or helicopters; others can float on water like Ash "keys" or the seeds from Alder "cones" and may fall into rivers and be swept along to a new location.

Seeds which are inside of hard shells are called nuts! Example from native trees include acorns and hazel nuts. Other non- native example include beech nuts and conkers. These are often moved by animals like squirrels or crows who bury them under soil or leaves to hide them for later. If they forget or can't find them these seeds could grow into new trees!

October is a good time to find many of these seeds growing on trees or on the ground beside them. Let's focus on the seed produced by the Oak - Acorns. These are common throughout Ireland and there is a good chance you could find them near your school!



Acorns and Oak Leaves



Alder Cones(seeds dispersed by water)

Dandelion Seed Head (seeds dispersed by wind)

Activity One: Learn More

We have two types of native Oak Trees in Ireland- Sessile and Pedunculate. Discover how to identify them, their history in Ireland and how they impact our biodiversity by checking out this great [video](#) from Aengus Kennedy with Creative Ireland.

See how well you know the different parts of common Irish trees. Can you match the right leaf to the right seed? Try the matching game [here](#). The spotter sheets in the next activity will help you find out the correct answers if you found that activity tricky.

Activity two: Notice Nature

Head outside for a walk around your school grounds, community or local park and see if you can find any Oak trees. There are many different things to look out for and we have listed some suggestions below but the most important thing is to get out!

- Are there are acorns growing or are there any on the ground? Try to identify whether the Oak tree is a Sessile or Pedunculate, as described in the video.
- Try to identify as many other trees as you can which have produced seeds. Look out for hazel, horse chestnut, sweet chestnut and beech. Just as with fruit, nuts also go through a ripening process. When they are ready they may change their colour or crack open and fall to the ground. Investigate which types of tree you find are the first and last to drop their seeds.
- You could also investigate if animals are feeding on these seeds. Many types of animals feed on different seeds including birds, squirrels and mice. You might spot a crow or squirrel hiding a nut to eat later or if you search under trees you could find a nibbled nut! Bring some identification sheets to help you. Try the following:
 - [Nature Detective- Fruits and Seeds](#)
 - [Nature Detectives- Autumn Leaves](#)

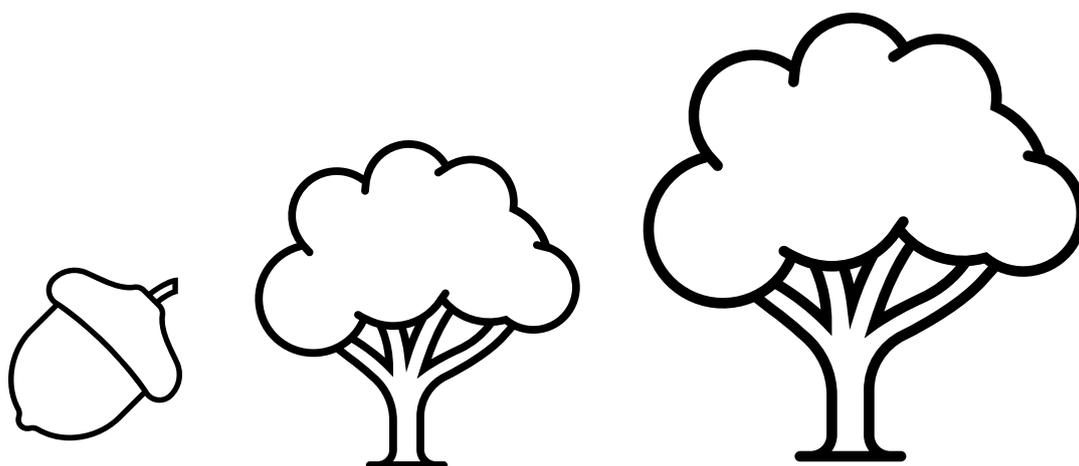
Activity Three: Take Action

One of the best things we can do to help increase biodiversity in our communities and protect us from climate change is to plant trees. Planting trees can also help reduce flooding, improve air quality and it creates areas for people to enjoy!

Not only does planting trees benefit the planet in many ways it is also really simple to do! You can simply collect several different types of seeds in autumn after they have fallen off trees and plant them! One of the easiest seeds to plant are acorns. Check out the LEAF guide to planting acorns individually [here](#).

Alternatively you could plant a mini forest in your classroom. Try planting a variety of different seeds you have collected like acorns, hazel nuts and birch in the same container like a milk tray. Watch this [demonstration video](#) to get a step by step guide to planting individually or as a mini forest. You can plant on your young oaks or other trees outside in the ground the following year once their leaves have fallen off. See the LEAF guide to planting native trees [here](#).

Not all seeds can be planted directly after collection, some need a few extra steps to prepare them. Try a little bit of research before you plant seeds other than acorns. The [Conservation Volunteers](#) website has useful information for many common seeds you will encounter.



Best of luck this month!