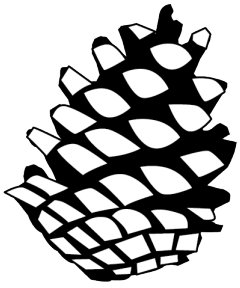
Acorn Crew Seed Exploration

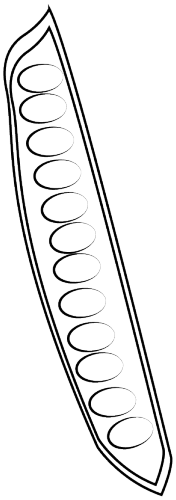
with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

Head outdoors and see if you can find any of the seeds below. Color or cirlce the ones you find!

Wild Plum

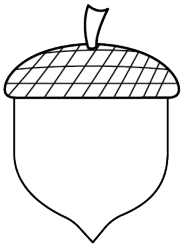


Pinecone



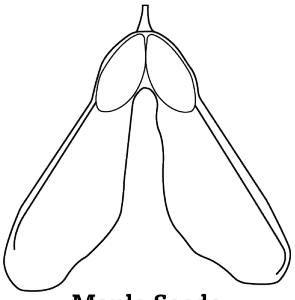
Locust Pod

Gray-headed coneflower

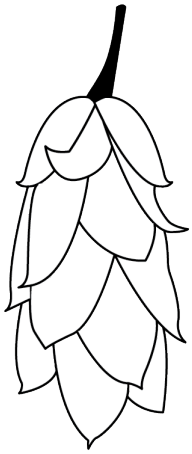


Acorn

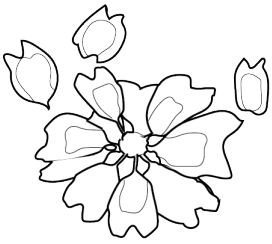
Bur



Maple Seeds

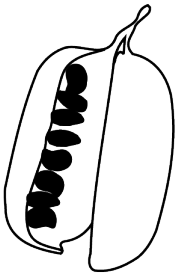


Ironwood

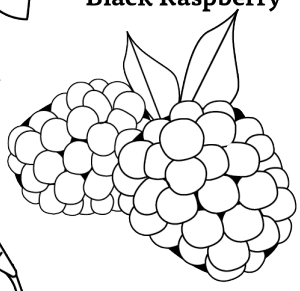


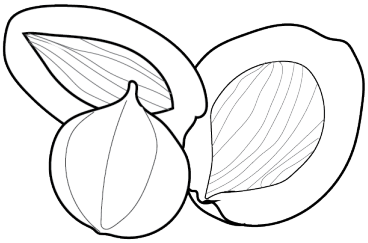
Rosinweed

White Wild Indigo

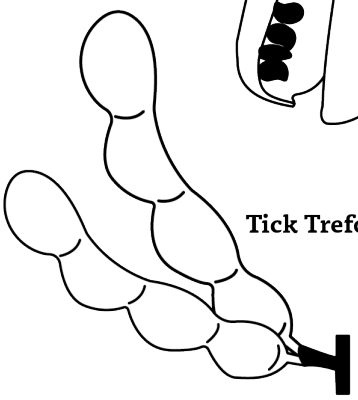


Black Raspberry



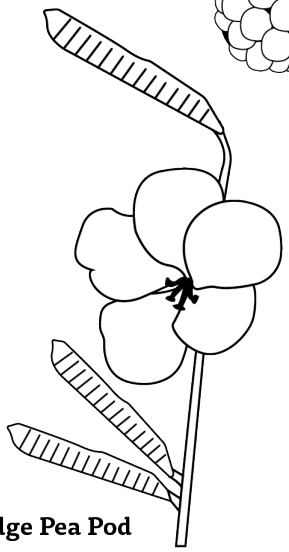


Shagbark Hickory Nut

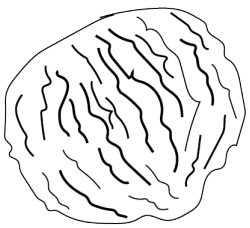


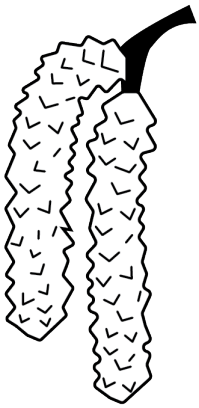
Tick Trefoil Pod

Black Walnut

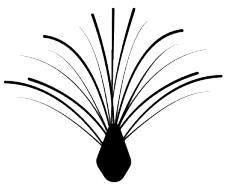


Partridge Pea Pod





Birch Catkins



Milkweed

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

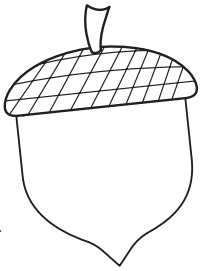
Seed Dispersal

Dispersal is how seeds get from where they're produced (trees, shrubs, flowers, etc.) to a new place where they can grow a new community of the same plant. To make sure the seeds have the chance to thrive, plants have come up with lots of different ways to disperse or move their seeds!

Types of seed dispersal

1. Gravity

Seeds that use gravity to disperse simply drop to the ground. From there, they'll often roll away from their home tree. These seeds are usually bigger and denser than other seeds, as they need the extra weight to drop down and move away. An example is an acorn.

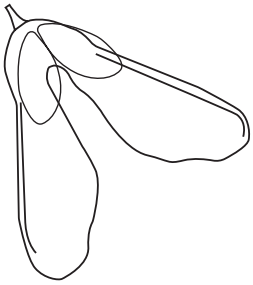


2. Ballistic Dispersal

Ballistic plants explode to disperse their seeds. Pressure builds up and then seeds spit out, often at speeds of 20 miles per hour or more! An example is partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), a yellow flowering plant.

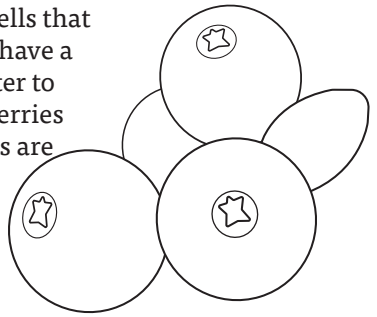
3. Wind

Seeds that disperse through the wind have adaptations for air travel. You've probably experienced wind-dispersed seeds when you've blown on a dandelion. Other examples are maple tree seeds, commonly called 'helicopters', and milkweed seeds.



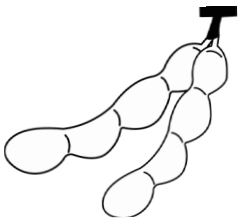
4. Water

Water dispersed seeds can float for long amounts of time over long distances. They can be found in various bodies of water including oceans, rivers and lakes. Often they have tough shells that keep water from getting in, but have a lightweight or semi hollow center to stay afloat. Coconuts and cranberries are both water dispersal seeds as are Iowa's native lotus plant seeds.



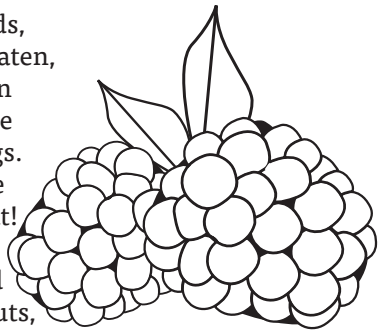
5. Hitchhiking

Hitchhikers are seeds that attach themselves to other organisms and hitch a ride to a new area. They have small hooks or sticky saps that enable these seeds to stick to wildlife and humans. As organisms remove them or rub against trees, the seeds fall off. If you've ever come back from the outdoors with little burs on your clothes, you've picked up a hitchhiking plant! A good example is tick trefoil (*Desmodium* spp.) which is common in Iowa's prairies.



6. Animal Dispersal

Lots of animals snack on seeds, fruits and nuts. After being eaten, the seeds will pass through an animal's digestive tract and be scattered with their droppings. You probably like some of the same plants these animals eat! Common examples are mulberries, blackberries, and raspberries or nuts like walnuts, hickory nuts and acorns.



Try it at home!

Take a walk or explore your yard, and gather different seeds. Then, test them in a variety of ways! Drop them from up high. Do they slowly flutter away or drop straight to the ground? Put them in water; do they float or sink? Do the seeds stick to you or fall off? Do you notice any shared characteristics or traits that help seeds move in certain ways?