

Explosive dispersal

Use a balloon and some confetti to show how some plant seeds are dispersed by explosion.

In the classroom

What you need

The 'confetti' from a hole punch, a balloon, an old sheet and a pin.

What you do

Shake the 'confetti' into the mouth of the balloon using a rolled up paper funnel.

Blow up the balloon and tie off.

Cover the floor with the sheet.

How are seeds dispersed?

Tell the class that you are going to demonstrate how some kinds of seeds can be dispersed by explosion.

Point out that the balloon is acting as a seedcase, and the paper inside is the seeds.

Hold the balloon over the sheet and burst it!

What happens

The confetti seeds fly everywhere.

Background Information

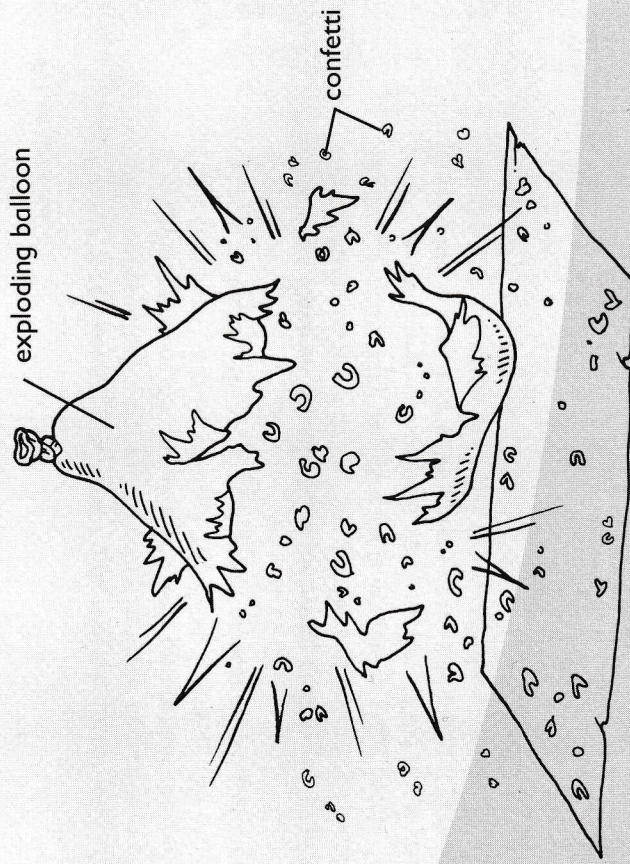
Why it happens

When the balloon (the seed pod) pops, the air pressure released carries the confetti (seeds) with it, scattering it. The purpose of seed dispersal is to spread the plants widely and to reduce competition between the growing plant and its parent.

By the way

Lupin seeds are dispersed by explosion. Refer back to other methods of dispersal, for example, by floating on water (coconut), by wind (sycamore) or by clinging to animals (burdock).

Ask the children to think of ways of modelling other dispersal mechanisms. For example, paper floating on water models water-borne seeds and paper spinners model wind-borne seeds. Velcro models plant burrs – indeed, plant burrs were the inspiration for Velcro's invention!



Curriculum links

KS2 Sc2 3d. QCA SoW 5B Life cycles
Envtl St/Science/LT&PL/PL/Level D/T target 5