

# ELF NOTES

*Environmental Learning for the Future - Vermont Institute of Natural Science*

*[www.vinsweb.org/education/elf/volunteers.html](http://www.vinsweb.org/education/elf/volunteers.html)*

## **GROW SOME SEEDS**

Grow sunflowers. You'll see flowers bloom, seeds form and then you can harvest seeds that you and the birds will enjoy eating! Buy a packet of the seeds at a store; look for "giant sunflowers" that will produce big, edible seeds. Choose a spot where there is sunshine all day. You can plant them in a pot or bucket that holds at least 4 gallons filled with one part potting soil to one part sand. Plant the seeds about a foot apart and about 1/2-inch deep. Water them well. The seeds will sprout in about two weeks. Water whenever the soil becomes dry, more often after flower heads form for a good crop of seeds. When the backs of the flowers turn yellowish, they are ready to harvest. Cut them and hang them to dry in a cool, shady place. After drying, remove seeds from the head. Roast some for yourself. Give some to the birds.

## **CYCLES**

### **INSIDE A FLOWER**

Whether they bloom in spring, summer, or fall, flowers play the all-important part in a plant's life cycle of producing seeds. A flower's structure, smell, color, and blossom time all contribute to this vital purpose.

There are many variations in structure and arrangement of parts, but all flowers include the parts necessary for producing seeds: stamens that carry pollen, and the pistil that contains ovules, which will become seeds. Pollen must be transferred from the stamens to the pistil for the ovules to be fertilized and develop into seeds. For some plants, pollen is transferred by the wind, for others by insects or birds.

Flowers with big colorful petals, sweet scent and the reward of extra pollen and sweet nectar attract insect and bird pollinators. Wind pollinated flowers usually have inconspicuous petals, stamens that dangle in the wind, exposed pistils, and produce an abundance of pollen.

A plant's life cycle and the timing of its flowering varies with the species.



## **ELF NEWS FROM SCHOOL**

