



## HUMMINGBIRD LOOKS FOR A B-F-F (Bud-Flower-Fruit) Flower Overview for Families

### What's a flower for?

What do you think? We like flowers because they some are pretty or smell nice, or even taste good!

But really, a flower is a plant's way of making more plants. But how can that be? Don't plants grow from seeds? Of course! But where do you think the seeds come from? Seeds are baby plants, and just like any other babies, they need to have parents. The seeds' parents are inside of flowers!

### A flower's life

When a flower first starts growing, it is curled up tight in a small **bud** growing on the plant. Sometimes the bud is round like a tiny basketball, sometimes pointy like a tiny football, but whatever shape it has, the flower is tucked safe inside the **sepals** which protect it.

As the bud gets older, the sepals open up and the **petals** of the flower spread out. A lot of flowers look pretty when they have their petals spread out, and sometimes they have a nice smell too. Sometimes people pick flowers because they like the way they look and smell. We like to decorate our homes with flowers, but the flowers we pick won't be able to do their job for the plant they grew on. They won't be able to make seeds.

In the middle of the flower is where the **male** and **female** parts grow. The male parts are called **stamens**, and they make a dusty powder called **pollen**. The stamens grow around the female part, which is in the very middle of the flower and is called the **pistil**. Inside the pistil are tiny **eggs**.

The eggs that are inside the female part, the pistil, can turn into seeds if they get some pollen from the male parts of a different flower. Since the pollen has to come from a different flower, a flower needs some help! Somehow the powdery pollen has to travel from the stamens of one flower all the way to the pistil of another flower.

Some flowers make very light pollen that can blow in the wind. That way the pollen can blow from one flower to another and help make new seeds. This kind of pollen makes some people sneeze when it blows in the air! But many flowers

have heavy or sticky pollen which doesn't blow around very well. These flowers need help from animals to move the pollen from one flower to another.

But why would an animal want to help move pollen for a flower? Flowers that need help from animals usually have a reward for their animal helper. Many flowers make nectar, a sweet juice that animals like bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds drink. While the animals are getting the nectar, some pollen from a flower may stick to their bodies. Then when they fly to another flower to get more nectar, some of the pollen may brush off on the next flower. These animals that help flowers are called "pollinators."

Many flowers that need animal partners advertise to the animals that they need. For example, the bright colors of many flowers attract different kinds of animals. Bees especially like yellow, white and blue flowers, but hummingbirds are like red flowers better. Some flowers that smell sweet to us attract bees and moth, while some flowers that smell bad to us attract flies. Flowers that attract only hummingbirds don't bother to make a smell, because hummingbirds can't smell!

Once a pollinator has visited a flower and brought some pollen to the pistil, the flower begins to change. Inside the pistil, the pollen meets the eggs, and the eggs start to turn into seeds. The bottom of the pistil gets bigger, helping to protect the seeds growing inside. The petals fall off, since they have finished their job of attracting a pollinator. But the flower isn't dead, it is just changing. The flower is changing into a fruit with seeds inside it!

### **Suggested reading**

*The Life Cycle of a Flower.* Aloian, Molly. New York: Crabtree, 2004.

*The Reason for a Flower.* Heller, Ruth. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1983.

# Flowering Plant Life Cycle

**POLLINATOR**

Plant with  
a  
**FLOWER**

Plant with  
a fading  
**FLOWER**

Plant  
with a  
**BUD**

**Draw pictures  
to match these  
words. Think of  
plants you see  
near your  
home!**

Plant  
with a  
**FRUIT**

**BABY**  
plant

Seed  
from a  
**FRUIT**