

Pollination Detectives

In this activity, pupils will investigate the different flowers they can find and link their findings to their knowledge of pollination. The activity could be done in the school grounds, or at a local park or wood. To see some good examples of wind pollinated plants, you may need to look for grass plants, or for catkins produced by trees such as birch, oak and willow (late winter to spring is the best time to see these).

Before the Activity

Before the activity, show pupils the table they will need to complete and talk them through what to do for each column:

Draw the flower you have found. — they should try to get the shape of the overall flower right, plus the shape and arrangement of any petals.

Do you know the name of the plant? — if they recognise the plant, encourage them to have their best guess at what it's called. They can leave this column blank if they don't know the name.

What colour or colours is it? — they could add some detail here depending on the flowers found, e.g. mainly bright blue with white patches.

Can you see the pollen? If you can, where is it? — make sure pupils are aware that pollen is a powdery substance that's often yellow or white in colour. If they can see it, encourage a description such as 'on stalks in the middle of the flower'.

Does it smell? And if it does, how would you describe the smell? — if pupils think the flower has a scent, they can describe it as they wish, e.g. 'it smells very strong', 'it smells sweet', 'it smells like soap', etc.

Do you think the flower is pollinated by insects or wind? — make sure pupils are aware of the different features of wind and insect pollinated flowers before the activity. They should be prepared to give reasons for their choice after the activity.

The usual safety precautions should be followed when taking a class outside. Make sure pupils are aware of some basic rules before they start the activity, e.g.

- Don't pick the flowers.
- Don't touch the pollen.
- Be careful where they walk — don't trample on plants.

Be mindful that this activity may not be suitable for some pupils, e.g. those with grass or pollen allergies.

During the Activity

- Pupils should complete the table themselves or with a partner.
- If necessary, guide pupils around the area so they see a wider range of plants.
- If possible, take photographs of the flowers found — this will help with discussions about the activity when back in the classroom.
- As well as looking at the flowers, encourage pupils to look for insects — can they see any visiting the flowers? Which insects are doing this? Which flowers are they visiting?

After the Activity

- Pupils should wash their hands before returning to the classroom.
- When back in the classroom, talk about the flowers that were found. Encourage pupils to use resources (e.g. the internet or books) to find/check the names of the plants.
- Discuss the pollen — what did it look like? Where was it found? If they couldn't see any pollen, does that mean that the flower didn't have any? Would it be easy for the pollen to blow away from the plant, or for it to get stuck to an insect's body?
- Discuss their decisions on which flowers they thought were insect or wind pollinated.
- Ask which flowers were their favourites — why would they pick them as favourites? Do they think insects would like them for the same reasons?



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Draw the flower you have found.	Do you know the name of the plant?	What colour or colours is it?	Can you see the pollen? If you can, where is it?	Does it smell? And if it does, how would you describe the smell?	Do you think the flower is pollinated by insects or wind?