

Can you think of what beans, walnuts, tomatoes, apples, cucumbers, and milkweed pods all have in common? If you said that they are all the part of the plant which holds the seeds you were correct. We usually think of plants like apples, oranges, and pears as fruit. Scientists call the part of the plant that holds the seeds the fruit. Therefore, all of the plant parts listed above are fruits, even those we call vegetables or nuts, or the ones we don't eat at all.

How many fruits and seeds can you list that people eat? Sometimes we eat the fleshy part of the fruit and spit out the seeds (apples, grapes). Sometimes we eat just the seed (nuts, grains); sometimes we eat both (string beans, strawberries).

If all the apples on a tree fell to the ground, most of the seeds would not grow into apple trees

because they would be shaded by the parent tree, and there would be too many seeds for the amount of water and food in the soil.

Fruit often provides a way for seeds to spread themselves to distant places where they have a better chance to grow. Sometimes animals eat the fruit. The hard covering of the seed protects it as it travels through the animal's body and leaves it in the animal's waste material. The animal carries the seed far from the parent plant. Squirrels scatter seeds by carrying nuts to secret hiding places. Many of these seeds are never eaten, and they sprout and grow into new trees. Some plants such as dandelions and milkweed are carried by the wind. Some seeds hitchhike rides on the clothing of people or on the fur coats of animals.



OPTIONAL  
ACTIVITY  
IDEA

Make a seed collection. Group your seeds by the way they travel.



### Functions of Plant Organs

Plant Organ	Functions
Roots	
Stem	
Leaves	
Flowers	
Fruit	
Seeds	

### Functions of Plant Organs

More than one organ may perform certain functions, so you may want to use a letter more than once.

- a. Make food by photosynthesis
- b. Hold plant firmly in the soil
- c. Produce the leaves
- d. Exchange gases with the air
- e. Allow the plant to reproduce
- f. Store food for later use
- g. Hold leaves up to the light
- h. Produce a new plant without using seeds
- i. Absorb water and minerals from the soil
- j. Hold the developing seeds
- k. Let water vapor escape into the air
- l. Conduct water and minerals upward to the leaves