



Flower Dissection

Be a botanist today! In this activity, pick a flower outdoors, then (carefully) cut it open to see all to see the different parts of the flower and what they do.

Why are we doing this activity?

It's springtime, and flowers are starting to bloom again! This time of year, lots of flowers grow in the forest, before the tree leaves are out. We call these flowers the "spring ephemerals," because they last only a short time before dying back until next year.

You'll also see lots of flowers blooming in gardens. Now is a great time to see what's inside a flower. When you choose a flower for this activity, make sure that you a) ask permission from whoever owns the property where the flower is growing, b) find one that has clear petals you can count. A flower with 3, 4, 5, or 6 petals will be easiest to dissect. c) cut the flower by its stem, near where it's growing out of the soil.

Learning about the parts of the flower will help you understand how they grow, what pollination means, and where we get our fruits and vegetables.

Supplies Needed

- Flower
- Small scissors or knife
- Tape
- Pencil & paper

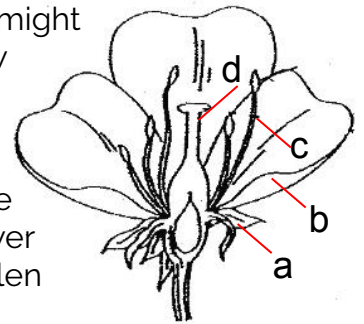




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What to do

1. Choose a flower (see page 1). Look around outside your home: You might be surprised to find lots of flowers in grassy spaces. Flowers grow in the woods in the spring, too. You will find flowers on common spring garden shrubs and trees, too, like crabapples and forsythia. These would be good choices. Do not use a dandelion or something that looks like one; these are very complex flowers and will be difficult to study.
2. Lay your flower down on a plain piece of paper.
3. Very carefully, separate the flower between two of the petals. You may need small scissors or a knife to cut between two adjoining petals.
4. Lay the flower out flat. It may help to tape the petals down.
5. Flowers usually have four parts, the petals, sepals, carpels (pistil), and stamens. Do you know which is which? Some flowers might have only 2 or 3 parts. Can you tell what they are? Draw and label the parts of your flower.
6. The sepals (a) protect the flower before it opens. The petals (b) attract insects that will spread the pollen. The stamens (c) hold the pollen near the outside of the flower so pollinators will collect it. The carpels (d) use the pollen for fertilization, so that the flower can grow into a fruit.



Want to go further?

- Try dissecting another, different, flower. How is it similar or different from the first flower you dissected?
- If your flower doesn't have all four parts, what seems to be missing? What do you think is going on?
- Flowers and gardens have long inspired writers and artists. How do they inspire you? Try painting *en plein air*, like the famous artist Claude Monet - go outside and paint what you see in the great outdoors!