

Explore Seeds with Wings

Collect birch and spruce seeds and discover their wings!

Did you know some seeds have wings? Go outside to collect birch and spruce seeds. Explore how wings help these seeds travel!

Materials Needed:

Large mixing bowl, spoon, Ziploc bag, access to outdoors (near birch and spruce trees) Optional: Magnifying glass.

Instructions:

Birch Seeds

Collect: Find a birch tree. Interior Alaska birch trees have trunks with white papery bark that peels off. Around the tree, look on the ground for tiny brown seeds with delicate round wings. Pick the seeds out of the snow with a spoon. In places where you see many seeds, fill a large mixing bowl with snow (try to take snow from both higher and lower layers of the snowpack).

Hint: If you go out after a windy day, you will see more seeds on the ground!

Experiment: Bring the bowl indoors and let the snow melt. How many birch seeds did you find? Do they float or sink? Blow gently and watch the seeds move on the surface of the water. How do you think their wings help them travel?

Spruce Seeds

Collect: Find a forested area with white spruce trees. Try looking on a south facing hillside with mixed birch and aspen trees

Seeds with Wings

Many plants disperse their seeds through the air. Winged seeds can have designs that are more aerodynamic than anything humans have ever built!

Learn more about winged seeds, courtesy of the BBC:

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00lxw4t

In Interior Alaska, several tree species grow seeds with wings, including birch, black spruce, white spruce, and alders.

Spruce seeds develop inside cones. Their wings develop as part of the scales in the cone. Look carefully inside a spruce cone or pinecone and you may be able