A fruit forms from an ovary. It contains one or more seeds and it helps them to spread out, or disperse, from the parent plant. Seeds need to spread out, so that the plants that grow from them do not compete with each other for space, water and light.

FRUITS AND ANIMALS
Some fruits can be dispersed by sticking to animals. They have hooks and spines that stick to fur and feathers. Mammals and birds pick them up on their bodies as they brush against the parent plant. The fruits may be carried many kilometres before they drop off.

This burdock fruit will travel far from the parent plant on this dog’s fur.

The seeds from many fruit are dispersed by passing through the body of an animal. These seeds develop in fruits which produce a soft, tasty substance around the seeds to attract animals. When the animal eats the fruit, it swallows the seeds. The seeds leave the animal in its droppings far from the parent plant.

This mouse swallows blackberry seeds and fruit. The seeds will be dispersed in the mouse’s droppings.

A gust of wind can push so strongly on the dandelion fruits that they break free and scatter.

FRUIT IN THE AIR
Fruits which use the air to carry them, grow special parts to increase their air resistance. This makes the fruit and the seed fall more slowly and be carried further on the wind. Some fruits, like the maple, have wings, while fruits like the dandelion have a tuft of hairs, these act as a parachute.

These sycamore fruits spin like helicopter rotors.

INVESTIGATE!

Make a model of a winged fruit from a piece of paper 6 cm long and 4 cm wide. Screw up about 2 cm of one end of the paper and tear the other end to make two wings 2 cm wide. Drop your fruit and see it spin. How does changing the size of the wings change the way the model fruit spins?