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Opening extract from

Wild Flowers

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Internet links

There are lots of websites with information and activities for nature lovers. At the Usborne Quicklinks Website we have provided links to some great sites where you can:

* play a game to grow your own flower online
* watch time-lapse movies of seeds growing and flowers opening
* discover the secret lives of flowers
* take an animated tour through the life cycle of a plant
* explore online flower identification guides
* find out which flowers grow near your home
* dissect a virtual flower

For links to these sites, go to the Usborne Quicklinks Website at www.usborne-quicklinks.com and enter the keywords "naturetrail wild flowers".

When using the Internet, please follow the Internet safety guidelines shown on the Usborne Quicklinks Website. The links at Usborne Quicklinks are regularly reviewed and updated, but Usborne Publishing is not responsible and does not accept liability for the content on any website other than its own. We recommend that children are supervised while on the Internet.

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Here are some of the places where wild flowers grow.



Rosebay willowherb grows at the side of railways.



White campion can be found in hedgerows.



Look for brooklime in marshes and by rivers.

Here are some of the many wild flowers you might spot growing on waste ground or in a country meadow.

Flowers in the wild

With their flimsy petals and delicate stalks, wild flowers like poppies and daisies may seem rather fragile. As a group of plants, though, they are really very tough. There have been flowering plants on Earth for over 145 million years, which makes flowers some of the best survivors on the planet. They can grow almost anywhere: from the hottest deserts to the coldest mountains and the dirtiest cities.

Originally, all flowers were wild; they just grew wherever they could. But, over time, people began to realize how useful flowers were, so they started growing them on purpose – for their looks, smell, taste, and to use as medicines. All the flowers people grow today have wild ancestors.



Looking for wild flowers

You're likely to see the widest variety of wild flowers in grassy, natural areas, but once you start looking, you may be surprised where they spring up. Most flowers need certain conditions to grow well. A plant's home, or habitat, provides all the things it needs to survive. Some flowers can grow almost anywhere. Others are fussier, so you'll only find them in certain places.

Watercress usually grows in fast-flowing, chalky streams.



Shepherd's purse will grow pretty much anywhere.



In the wild, flowers live and die at their own pace, and make seeds so new flowers can grow. If you pick them, though, there'll be fewer seeds, then fewer flowers – and some may disappear altogether. So look, but don't pick, and there'll always be wild flowers for everyone to enjoy.



Yellow archangel is common in woods.



Sand dunes and cliffs are the best places to look for stonecrop.



Clumps of sea kale grow on pebbly beaches.



Common butterwort can be found on mountains.

Greater knapweed

SPOTTING TIP

The best time to spot poppy plants growing buds is in late spring. Their flowers open in summer, and then turn into fruit in early autumn.

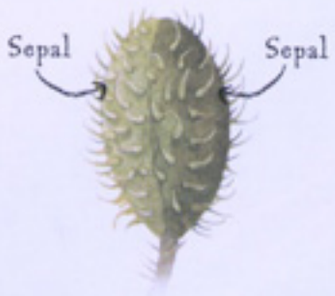
How a flower grows

A flower goes through several very different stages during its life. You might see young undeveloped flowers, curled up inside a bud, or others which have stopped flowering and turned into fruits and seeds.

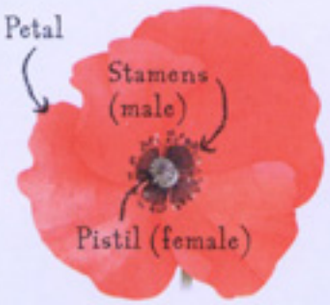
Here you can see the life story of a poppy. All flowers (well, almost all) develop in a similar way.



1. A poppy plant grows from a seed. Buds form, with flowers curled up inside.



2. Leaf-like sepals protect the delicate petals. They begin to open as the flower grows.



3. Inside the petals are male and female parts called the stamens and pistil.



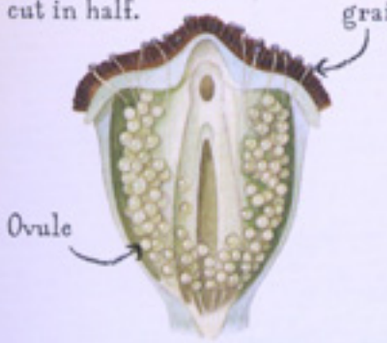
4. The pistil is made of two parts: a sticky stigma on top and an ovary beneath.



5. Pod-like anthers on the tips of the stamens make a powder, called pollen.



6. A bee visits the poppy to feed. Pollen sticks to the bee, who takes it to another poppy.



7. The pollen rubs off onto a poppy's stigma. Tubes grow from the pollen down to egg-like ovules inside the ovary.



8. Pollen has tiny bits inside, which travel down the tubes into the ovules. The stamens and petals wilt and drop off.



9. Inside the pistil, the ovules start turning into seeds. The pistil swells, and is now called a fruit.



10. The fruit ripens and its wall dries up. When the wind blows, the seeds are shaken out of holes, like pepper from a pot.

To make seeds, these poppies must have pollen from other poppies. Pollen from any other flowers just won't do.