

ADAPTATIONS – BEE AND PLANT FACTSHEET

The majority of plants on earth are flowering plants.

These include trees, scrubs, grasses and cacti. Plants have special adaptations that help them reproduce.

While animals are free to move around, plants cannot so they rely on pollinators such as animals and insects (and wind) to distribute the pollen containing the sperm that fertilises the ovum in the flower and completes the reproductive cycle.

Many plants have evolved special relationships with bees known as a symbiotic relationship. This means that both the bee and plant benefit from the relationship: bees get nectar and pollen, and plants get to reproduce as the bees transfer pollen from one plant to another.



Flowers are specialised structures that have a number of adaptations to attract pollinators. For example, they are colourful, smell sweet, and contain pollen and nectar. They also make fruit and seeds that attract animals to help disperse the seeds, thus completing the reproductive cycle. The methods of distributing fruits and seeds are incredibly varied and ingenious, and are far more complex than reproductive cycles found in the animal kingdom.

Bees have a number of specialised adaptations that help them to be great pollinators. Their bodies carry an electrostatic charge that attracts pollen (see photo below). They have special hairs that are arranged to form pollen 'baskets' on their hind legs. These adaptations allow them to carry large amounts of pollen. Bees can visit many flowers while carrying lots of pollen, before returning to their hive where the pollen will be used to create bee bread.

