

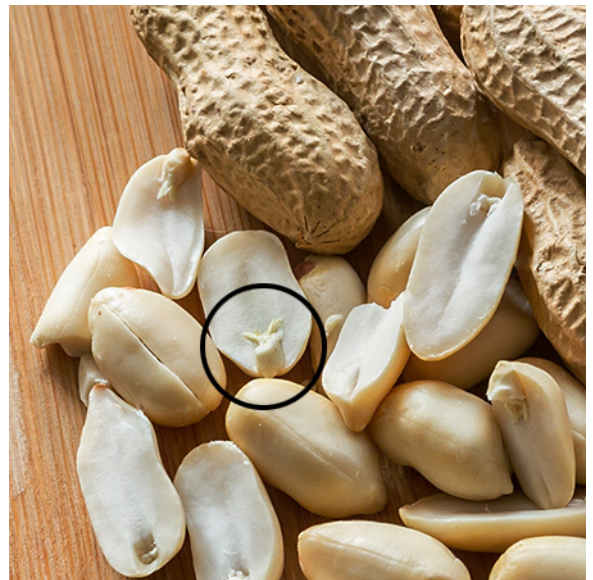
# The Importance of Seeds

## Plant Parts Week 6 Reading Page

Have you ever thought about a seed being a superhero? A living thing with extraordinary powers that can step in and save the day?

Inside of each seed is a baby plant just ready to grow. Plants make oxygen for our air and food for all other living creatures. They help keep our soil in place and clean our water. We use them to make medicine, shelter, and lots of other products we need to survive.

Quite simply, life would not exist on this planet without plants. Seeds are the way most plants make new plants.



*Look closely at the peanut in the circle and you can see the tiny plant (embryo) with two baby leaves.*

In addition to plants being important in general, it is also very important that there are lots of different kinds of plants in our world. When there are lots of different kinds of living things in the ecosystem it is called **biodiversity**. Why is it important for our ecosystem to have many different types of members?

What if we had only one type of tree in our forests and a big insect population came in and ate all of the leaves off that particular type of tree? Or what if a disease infected the roots of plants we relied on for food. That actually happened!

White potatoes were a very important food crop in Ireland. However, in the mid-1850s a fungus started attacking the roots of the potatoes and it killed a majority of the potato plants in the country for many years in a row. People were so dependent on this one type of food that millions of people died because they did not have enough to eat. Millions more had to move to other countries that had more food available. This horrible time in history showed people how important it was to grow a variety of food crops so that if one was destroyed, there were other things that could be grown and eaten.

### Seed Banks Keep Seeds Safe

To make sure this never happens again, scientists work hard to get people to grow lots of different types of plants. They also make sure to save seeds so that when natural disasters do hit (like fires, floods, and disease), we have back-ups to grow replacement plants. Scientists save these seeds in protected locations they call **seed banks**.

In a seed bank, seeds are kept in a cool (generally frozen), dry condition so that they do not sprout or rot. Seed banks are designed very carefully to be safe from people and the environment. However, seeds can't be stored forever. Every so often, the seeds are taken out of storage and used to grow new plants, which will in turn produce fresh seeds for storing in the seed bank.

According to the United Nations, there are about 1,750 individual seed banks worldwide. Isn't it cool to think that there are millions of tiny seeds, just waiting to come save the day if needed?  
**Seeds are superheroes!**

## Reading Comprehension Questions

1. True or false: Seeds contain baby plants.
2. List one of the reasons plants are important in our world:
3. What is it called when there are lots of different kinds of living things in an ecosystem?
4. What is a seed bank?
5. Draw a picture of what you think a seed superhero would look like (share it with us too at [info@kidsgardening.org](mailto:info@kidsgardening.org)):