

Squirrel Food Collecting Guide

What do squirrels eat?

Squirrels eat lots of different types of food but their favourite food is seeds. Seeds of some trees grow inside nuts or cones.

Oak, hazel and beech trees are all British trees that grow nuts. These trees lose their leaves in winter and are called deciduous trees.

Trees that grow cones are called conifers. Types of conifer trees in Britain are Scots pine, Norway spruce and Sitka spruce.

Conifers are more common in Scotland and Northern England and deciduous trees are more common South England and Wales.



Below are the different types of nuts and cones that squirrels eat

Beechnuts

- Beech trees are very common in Britain. They are most common in east England and south-east Wales.
- The nut of the beech tree is called a beechnut.
- Beechnuts are small, shiny and dark brown. They are almost triangle shaped.
- The nuts grow inside hairy cups. You might find these opened 'cups' on the ground under beech trees.



Leaves of the beech tree



Beechnuts

**The 'cup' that
beechnuts grow
inside**

Hazelnuts

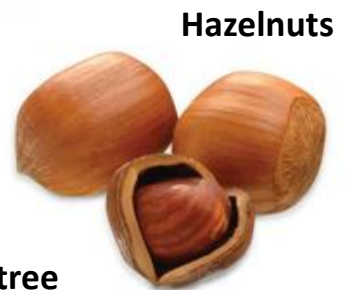
- Hazel trees are usually found in woodland with other trees such as oak trees, ash trees and birch trees.
- You might have eaten hazelnuts! The bit we eat is the seed, inside the shiny brown shell.
- Hazelnuts grow on the tree in groups of 4 or 5.
- The nuts are shiny and dark brown. They are round with a small point on one end and are flatter on the other end. They are about 2cm in size.



Hazelnuts growing on the tree



Leaves of the hazel tree



Hazelnuts

Acorns

- Acorns grow on oak trees.
- Oak trees are very common in south and central Britain.
- Acorns are held onto the tree by a little hat called a cupule.
- You might find acorns with or without this cupule as it falls off when the acorns are ripe and ready to fall from the tree.



Acorns growing on the tree



Leaves of the Oak Tree



Acorns

Scots pine cones

- Scots pine are one of only a few British conifer trees. The others have been brought to Britain from other places by humans to grow for wood.
- Scots pine are very common in the Scottish Highlands. Red squirrels really like to eat the seeds inside the cones of these trees.



Scots pine tree



Cone of a Scots pine tree

Norway spruce cones

- Norway spruce trees were brought to Britain to grow in timber plantations.
- They are often used as Christmas trees!
- The cones of Norway spruce trees are longer than other pine cones.



Cones growing on a Norway spruce tree



Here is a whole pinecone and one that's been taken apart by a squirrel

Sitka spruce cones

- Sitka spruce trees were brought to Britain from North America in Victorian times.
- Wood from Sitka spruce trees is useful for making paper, boats and ships.
- You can tell cones of Sitka spruce from other cones as they have crinkled edges.

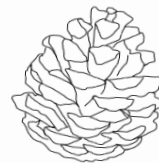


Cones growing on a Sitka spruce tree.









Cone of a Sitka spruce tree. You can see the crinkled edges.

Tips for Nut Collecting



- Put the nuts or cones you find in a plastic bag along with a filled-in Nut Collecting Record Sheet.
- If you find lots and lots of the same type of nut please only take a few.
- Only collect nuts and cones that have fallen from the tree. Please do not pull them off the tree.
- Try to collect cones that are not broken into bits.
- If you don't find many nuts or cones, that's okay! That tells us that there is not a lot of food for squirrels where you are!

Please collect these **squirrel foods**:

Beechnuts	Small, shiny, triangular. Grow inside a hairy cup.	
Hazelnuts	Round, shiny, dark brown. Flatter on one end.	
Acorns	Brown, oval shaped. Have a 'hat' called a cupule.	
Scots pine cone	Small and harder than other cones.	
Norway spruce cone	Long, spiky.	
Sitka spruce cone	Have crinkled edges.	

Please **DO NOT** collect these:

Squirrels do not eat these.



**Horse
chestnuts**

Much bigger than
hazelnuts.

Found in a spiky
green case.



**Sycamore
Seeds**

Small seeds with
papery 'wings'.



Nut Collecting Record Sheet

Date:	
Collecting Location:	
Name of Collector:	
Name of School:	

What is the Weather like?

Is it raining? Is there sunshine or clouds? Is it hot or cold? Describe the weather here:

What item have you collected? Circle below:

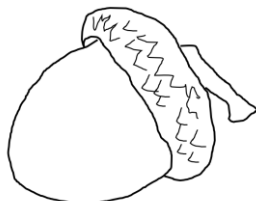
Beechnut



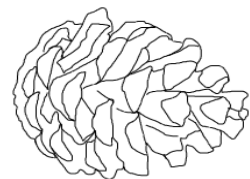
Hazelnut



Acorn



Cone



Where did you find the item?

Was it on the ground? Under a tree? Was it under leaves or out in the open? Describe as many details as you can think of here:

When you have filled in this sheet, put it in the bag with your collected squirrel food. Thank you for helping with our project!