



Mendel came from a family of farmers, and he knew a thing or two about plants. So he decided to study inheritance by doing experiments with the common pea plant. Here's what he already knew:

Fertilization of the common pea plant

Flowers contain the reproductive organs of plants. Like many flowering plants, pea plants combine their male and female parts in the same flower. For fertilization to occur and new plants to grow, pollen from the male parts must reach eggs in the female parts.

Flower Anatomy

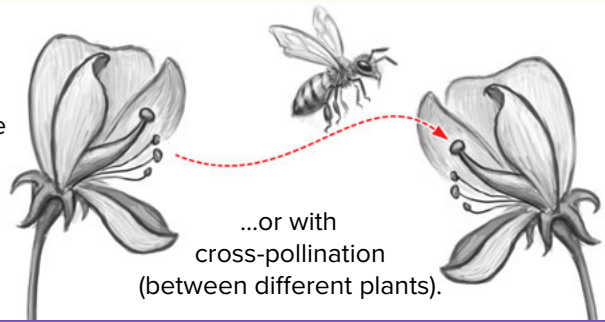


Pollination by Bees

Bees get their food from flowers. While they do this, pollen from stamens clings to their legs, and the bees carry the pollen to the carpels. The bees get fed, and the flowers get fertilized.

Bees can help with self-pollination...

...or with cross-pollination (between different plants).



From Flower to Seedpod

After the pollen fertilizes the eggs, the carpel grows into a pea pod. The peas inside are the fertile seeds that can grow into new plants.

