



DISSECT A FLOWER

Use this Spring to learn about plants!

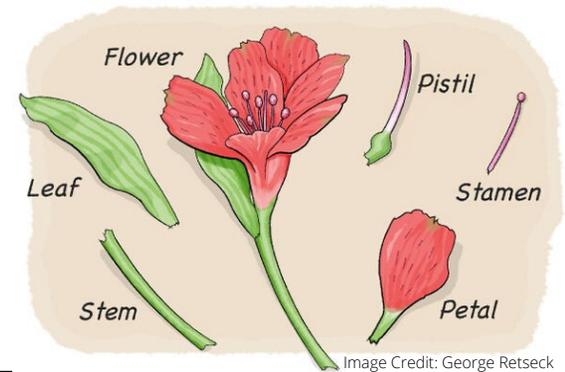
Materials

- 3 fresh flowering plants (Example: roses, tulips, lilies, petunias, carnations or irises.) You will need at least the stem with a flower attached for each of these. Note: Make sure you select "perfect flowers," which have male (stamen) and female (pistil) plant parts, such as those listed above. If you have allergies to certain plants, make sure that you use an alternative.
- Glass or cup with water
- Six paper plates labeled stem, petal, leaf, pistil, stamen, and other.
- Tweezers
- Scissors
- Magnifying glass or hand lens (optional)
- At least one additional (intact) specimen of each of the flower types you chose to dissect (optional)
- Paper (optional)
- Colored pencils (optional)

Procedure

- Carefully look at each of the flowering plants. If you have a magnifying glass, you can use it to examine your plants and their flowers. What does each plant and flower look like?
- Choose one of your flowering plants, and start your plant dissection. Use your hands, scissors or tweezers and carefully take apart your plant. Which plant parts can you identify?
- Once you have removed one part of the plant, try to identify it, and place it on the corresponding plate. Can you find a plant part for each plate?
- If you cannot identify a specific plant part, place it on the "Other" plate.
- When you have finished taking the first plant apart, look at all its different parts. How do different parts within one plant compare?
- Repeat the dissection with the remaining two flowering plants.
- Compare the plant parts on each paper plate. What do you notice about the same plant part from different flowering plants?
- Look at all the plant parts that you placed on the "Other" plate. What do you think these plant parts are? How can you find out?

- Extra: If you have intact specimens of the types of flowers you dissected, examine these to see how all of the plant parts you identified fit together in the whole flower. How do these vary across different types of flowers?
- Extra: Draw each of your flowering plants on a piece of paper. Color your plant and label each part that you identified.



Results

Each of them should have had a stem, which might have had some green leaves on it; colorful flower petals; the female flower part (pistil) at the center of the flower; and the male plant parts (stamen) that produce the pollen.

Why?

From your examination of the flowering plants, you might have noticed that each plant looks quite different. Obvious differences, for example, are the size or color of a flower. However, as you compared the same plant parts between different flowers, you might have observed that they looked somewhat similar. In addition, you should have seen that they have the same functional features. Although flower petals can differ in size and color, they are usually brightly colored or shaped in a way to attract pollinators, such as bees. The differences between different flowering plants allow us to identify different plant species.

To learn more about biology and local wildlife, check out the Natural History exhibit at the Pink Palace Museum or visit the Litcherman Nature Center.