

Weather Forecasting with Seed Cones

You can predict when weather is likely to be dry or wet by observing seed cones



Age: All

Time: 20 minutes

Seed cones from Lake Wilderness Arboretum can help you predict weather.

Here's How:

- 1. Gather seed cones** from the grounds of the Arboretum. You can find seed cones from many trees including Douglas Fir, Coast Redwood, Incense Cedar, Dawn Redwood, Giant Redwood, Atlas Cedar, Deodar Cedar, Lebanon Cedar, Sitka Spruce, and Japanese Cedar trees.
- 2. Take them home and place them on a board or table outdoors** under cover, perhaps a covered porch or deck.
- 3. Observe each day whether the scales of the seed cones open or close.**
 - What is the weather like when the scales are open?
 - What is the weather like when the scales are closed?

The Back Story:

The scales of seed cones open and close depending on moisture in the air. Seed cones can store up to 200 tiny seeds, some of them winged. When the air is dry the scales of the seed cone open, and the wind carries the seeds far away from the shade of the mother tree. When rain is likely, the scales close and the seeds stay dry.

If the scales opened while it was rainy, the seeds would get wet and be very heavy. They would drop too close to the mother tree and not have enough sunlight or food to grow.

Below are photos of some seed cones and their seeds that are in the arboretum.

