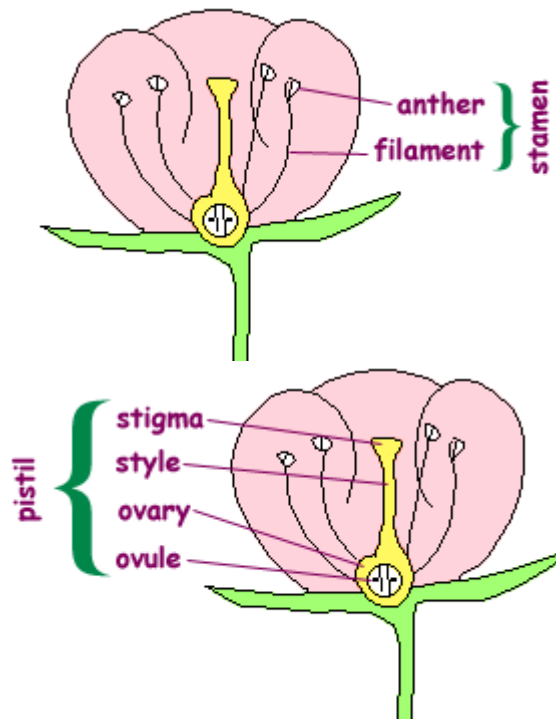


Seed to Seed, 101

Where do seeds come from? Flowers are the key. Although we humans enjoy their beauty, fragrance and, in some cases, nutrition, flowers are not here to please us! Their sole function is to produce seeds. The color, size, shape, smell, and other characteristics of flowers are vital to this effort. Flower structure can vary greatly, but there are a number of basic parts. The female organ, the **pistil**, is generally in the center of the flower. Its sticky **stigma**, which traps pollen, is held up by the tube-like **style**. This leads down to the **ovary**, inside of which are **ovules**, which contain female egg cells. The male parts, the **stamens**, typically surround the **pistil**. The **anther** on top of the stamen produces pollen, which contains male sperm cells. During pollination, pollen is moved from male to female flower parts by wind, bees, birds, bats, and a host of other animals. Flowers entice pollinators — using bright colors, designs, special shapes, and aromas — to the promise of sweet, nutritious nectar inside. When a pollen grain lands on the stigma, a tiny tube grows from it down to the ovary. Sperm cells then travel through this tube to an ovule, and there joins with an egg cell in a process called **fertilization**. The fertilized ovule will become a seed, and the ovary, a fruit. Without this process, the cycle of life would cease!

From Seeds! The Promise of Life

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