

A

Parts of a plant

Here are some metaphors based on parts of trees and plants:

Seed(s) is often used to talk about the start of an idea or feeling: **the seeds of success, the seeds of discontent, the seeds of revolution.**

Root(s) is used to suggest the origins of something. You can talk about **going back to your roots**, for example, meaning going back to the place where your family came from. You can also talk about **the root of a problem** or **the roots of a tradition.** **Putting down roots** means settling down and making your home in one place: After travelling the world for a couple of years, I was ready to go home and **put down some roots.**

When an idea becomes known or accepted, it can be said to **take root.** The **grassroots supporters** of an organisation or society are the ordinary people in it, not the leaders.

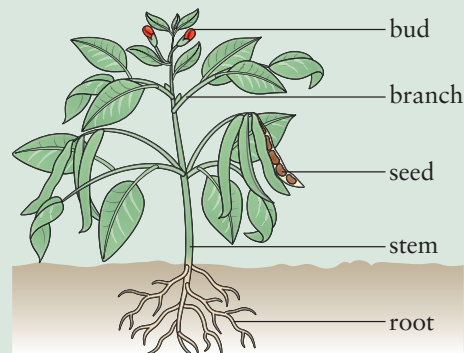
Deeply and **firmly** collocate with **rooted:** Its origins are **firmly/deeply rooted** in the 19th century.

Stem is used as a verb to signify that something originates in something else: Her discontent **stems** from a traumatic experience she had last year.

Bud is used in the expression **nipped in the bud** [flower before it opens] [stopped before it develops into something]: He's showing signs of neglecting his work – we'd better **nip that in the bud.**

The adjective **budding** can also mean showing promise of future development: She's a **budding** young actor.

A branch is something that grows off or **branches out** from a main organisation. We talk about **branches of a shop** or a **business branching out into new directions:** We don't have the blue sweater in your size here, but you could try our Oxford Street **branch.**



B

Metaphorical verbs connected with plant growth and gardening

The new boss is planning to **weed out** older or less experienced staff. [get rid of]

The government will probably have to **prune back** its proposals. [cut/limit]

At last she **is reaping the rewards of** all her years of study. [is getting results from]

Because we didn't protest about the change, we are now **reaping what we sowed.** [experiencing the logical results of our actions – usually used in negative contexts]

The journalists **have dug up** some interesting facts. [have discovered]

The idea **was germinating** while we were on holiday. [was beginning to develop]

Out-of-town shopping centres **have been sprouting up** all over the country. [have been appearing quickly in large numbers]

Our business **is flourishing.** [is doing very well]

We are beginning to see the **green shoots** of economic recovery. [first signs that the economy is improving]

A deciduous tree **sheds** its leaves. [[loses] Companies can **shed employees/jobs.** People can **shed worries/inhibitions/weight.**

Plants can **thrive;** so can people and things [grow/develop well and successfully]: The language school is **thriving** – student numbers are up from last year. She loves her high-powered job and seems to **thrive on** stress and crises!

Plants **fade, wither, shrivel** and **wilt** when they die. These verbs can be used metaphorically: Hopes of finding survivors are **fading.** [becoming smaller] Revenues/Donations/Profits have **shrivelled** in recent years. [become less]

It was so hot in the classroom that the students were starting to **wilt.** [lose energy] A **glance/look/remark** can **wither** or **be withering** [make the recipient feel scorned]: She gave him a **withering look.**



Exercises

31.1 Match up the pairs to make collocations.

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|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 nipped | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5 to reap | <input type="checkbox"/> | a of the problem | e roots |
| 2 a budding | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 to take | <input type="checkbox"/> | b root | f in the bud |
| 3 grass | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 the seeds | <input type="checkbox"/> | c Olympic athlete | g rewards |
| 4 the root | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | d of discontent | |

31.2 Fill the gaps in these sentences.

- Alec has spent most of his life in London, but he is keen to get back to his when he retires. His family came from Scotland, so he'll move there.
- The business is firmly in Western Australia.
- The idea took some time to root, but it's very fashionable now.
- His grandfather sowed the of the business's success.
- The US bookshop chain is opening a number of in the UK.
- It's about time she down some roots.
- The idea for her novel from her interest in mountain climbing.
- The West Side Drama College turns out a hundred actors every year.

31.3 Divide the verbs in the box into two groups: verbs associated with growth and health and verbs associated with decline and death.

fade flourish germinate shrivel sprout wilt thrive wither

31.4 Suggest three nouns that each of these adjectives could describe.

- budding
- flourishing
- withering
- fading
- deeply rooted
- thriving

31.5 Rewrite the sentences using plant metaphors instead of the underlined words.

- My hopes of getting a job are disappearing. Unemployment is at an all-time record.
- The firm is cutting the labour force in order to reduce costs.
- She got rid of her inhibitions at the party and danced with everyone!
- He and his wife are now receiving the rewards of many years of hard work building up their business.
- The party is trying hard to get rid of the extremists and create for itself a more moderate political image. They want to reflect the views of their ordinary supporters.
- Some people seem to grow and develop on difficult challenges.
- A blogger found out some alarming facts about government spending.
- Well, if you won't study for your exams, don't be surprised if you suffer the negative consequences of your actions.
- After three years of recession, we are beginning to see the first signs of an economic recovery.

31.6 Over to you

- Do you have any responsibilities that you would prefer to shed at the moment?
- Can you think of a situation where you reaped the rewards of something you did?
- What in your life is flourishing at the moment?
- Where are your family's roots?