Portable Flower Press

About Flower Pressing:

Pressing flowers is a practice that goes back hundreds, if not thousands, of years. This was a way to preserve and document unfamiliar types of flowers and plants for scientific study and as a hobby. William Bartram, a naturalist from the late 1700s traveled through lands that would become North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Tennessee. A naturalist studies animals, plants, and their natural environments; they gathered samples of unfamiliar plants. Naturalists often pressed their discoveries in order to preserve them.


How does it work?

To press flowers or leaves, they need to be between two pieces of paper with heavy weight or pressure on top and bottom. This squeezes out all the water that is in the petals and leaves. Flowers can be pressed in between books or using specially made presses that can be tightened as the flowers dry. The more they dry, the tighter they can be pressed.

Things to Keep in Mind:

- Not all flowers are easy to press: bulky blooms like roses or camellias take a long time to dry and need a lot of pressure to get all the water out.
- Look for smaller, flatter blooms to press
- Label your “finds” as you put them in your press so that you know what they are later.
- Pick responsibly: do not pick flowers from a neighbor’s garden without permission and check to be sure there are not any insects hiding inside.
- No need to pull up an entire plant petals to roots... all you need are a leaf or two and the bloom.
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Supplies:

- 4 pieces cardboard cut into 6” squares
- 6 pieces white paper cut into 6” squares
- 4 Rubber Bands
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scissors or box cutter
- Leaves and blooms gathered from the garden
- Markers or stickers for decoration (optional)

Instructions:

Step 1: With the help of a grown-up, cut at least 4 6-inch squares of cardboard and at least 6 pieces of white computer paper. Now is the time to pick the top of your press. Pick a piece of cardboard that does not have any tape or printing on it. Decorate it now if you choose and set it aside.
Step 2: Gather the samples you would like to press.

Step 3: Place 1 piece of cardboard on the table, add 1 piece of computer paper on top, making sure all the edges are lined up. Arrange your samples so they are not overlapping on the paper and write a label next to them that says the type of plant or the date using a pencil. Place a piece of white paper on top and cover that with a piece of cardboard making a sandwich.

Step 4: Repeat with the remaining pieces of cardboard and paper and samples. You should end with your decorated piece of cardboard on the top, with the decorations facing up.

Layers should go in this order:
- Base/Layer 1: Cardboard
  - Paper
  - Plants
  - Paper
- Layer 2: Cardboard
  - Paper
  - Plants
  - Paper
- Layer 3: Cardboard
  - Paper
  - Plants
  - Paper
- Top: Cardboard
Step 5: Carefully, wrap rubber bands around the flower press - 2 going vertically (up and down) at each end and 2 horizontally on each end (left to right) should be plenty. If you are trying to press thicker samples, go ahead and wrap extra rubber bands to be sure it is nice and tight.

As you go on more adventures, you can stack new layers on top of your press to make one that is even bigger. It usually takes a couple weeks for leaves and flowers to dry.

Love pressing flowers? Consider making one out of wood and screws, like this!