

Pressed Plants



Supplies

- ✓ **Paper**
Newspaper, junk mail, or any other paper you have.
- ✓ **Two heavy, flat items**
Milk cartons or soup boxes that are filled with water; big books; OR use two stiff boards about 6x6" inches. These will be the outside of your press.
- ✓ **Strong, thick strap**
A belt, sock strips, t-shirt strips
- ✓ **Dandelion flowers & leaves**
We have chosen to begin with dandelions because there is no harm in collecting from almost anywhere. Also be aware if there is notification that pesticides have been used—avoid handling plants that have been treated.
- ✓ **Scissors**
- ✓ **Marker**
- ✓ **Magnifier**
- ✓ **Notecard or blank paper**

A simple way to preserve plants is to press leaves and flowers between sheets of paper.

Directions

1. Gather your supplies (except for leaves and flowers).
2. Cut paper to the same size as the flat items that you will use as your press (photo 1). You will need 6 sheets for each plant you want to press. Plus 6 more for the top of your plant sandwich.
3. Go outside to search for dandelions (photo 2). It is important to respect and protect habitat whenever you are collecting. Never pick all the flowers—leave some for the bees.
4. You can carry your flowers and leaves in a folded piece of paper.
5. Working on a flat surface, stack 6 pieces of the paper that you cut on top of one of your cartons, books or boards.
 - Arrange the flowers and leaves so that they are not touching each other. Remember that when they are flattened, they will spread out a bit (photo 3).
 - Stack 3 more pieces of paper and place more flowers and leaves.
 - If you like, you can dissect apart the flowers and place parts of the flowers on the paper.
 - Continue until you have placed all your plant parts.
6. Place the other carton, book or board on top of the stack
7. Carefully wrap the strap around the whole stack to hold it together. It should fit tightly so that the plants are being compressed. Tie knots or twist a twig into the strap to tighten (photo 4).
8. On a piece of paper, write down the date and location where you collected your dandelions.
9. Now for the hardest part—wait two weeks to open your press to see your flattened plants.



Photo 1: Trace and cut paper to size.



Photo 2: Collect dandelion flowers and leaves.



Photo 3: Arrange flowers on paper.



Photo 4: Stack papers and flowers between press and wrap tightly.

Dig deeper.

Why this works:

The paper around the plants absorbs the moisture that is pushed out of the plants by the pressure put on it by the heavy containers, or tightly wrapped boards.

What next?

- Pressed flowers and leaves can be taped to pieces of paper to create greeting cards or artworks.
- Expand beyond dandelions to other kinds of plants. Whenever collecting away from your home, be sure to ask permission to pick plants and always follow responsible collecting practices.
- Look more closely.
- If you have a magnifier, examine the flowers and leaves in detail.

Museum collection connections.

The plant specimens in our collection have been preserved by pressing them between paper and boards. Scientists go out into the field to identify plants, pick a few, and press them. They are stored in cabinets that keep them away from moisture, light and pests. We have pressed plants that are 150 years old! They give us a chance to look back in time to learn about how the environment and climate have changed. The plants we collect now will help people in the future answer questions we haven't even thought of yet.

