

DIY Pressed Plant Cards Project



At a Glance:

Here we will focus on pressing and drying plant material to make your own set of greeting cards. However, dried plant material can be used in a variety of ways: bookmarks, framed wall art, jewelry, gift tags, and candles.

Materials for Pressing Plants:

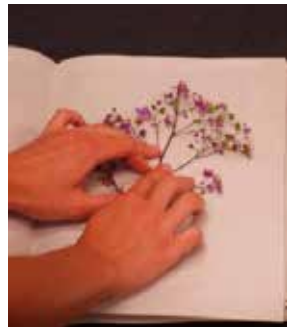
- A few large, heavy books (think encyclopedias, dictionaries, text books)
- Newsprint, tissue paper, or paper towels
- Plant material
- Scissors for collecting plant material

Selecting the Right Plants:

Selecting plant material is the most important step in determining the outcome of your finished product. In general, color preservation is attributed to how quickly the plant dries once it has been pressed. Plants that dry quickly tend to hold their color through the drying process, while plants that have thick or succulent parts will dry more slowly and become brown or even moldy during the drying process. Don't forget to look at trees and bushes for flower buds too!

Good Plant Material: Perennial plants (if the leaves and flowers are not too thick), herbs, ferns, and deciduous tree leaves.

Plant Material to Avoid: Plants that have thick and succulent stems, bulbs, leaves, or flowers.



Pressing Your Plants:

All you need here are a few large books and newsprint, paper towels, or tissue paper to protect the book and to pull moisture from the plants. When you arrange your plants, minimize overlapping of plant parts in order to avoid creasing or folding in your finished product. Remember, how you arrange the plants here is the way they will stay when they are completely dried.

Press the plants in the books, between layers of newsprint, leaving about a quarter-inch to a half-inch of pages between each layer. Once all of your material has been pressed, stack some additional books on top and make sure you leave your press in a well-ventilated area to promote faster drying. If you like, you may even point a box fan at the stack of books to speed up the drying process.

After a few days, be sure to check your press to see if you need to rearrange any stray petals or folded leaves and to see if the plants are drying properly. After a week or two, the plants will be completely dry (you can test this with your fingernail—if the plant is brittle, it is dry; if it feels like it will bend and fold, it is still wet). Once dry, you may remove your plants from the press and start getting creative!

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Suggested Materials for Greeting Cards:

- Dried plant material
- Wax paper
- Paint brushes, scissors, tweezers
- Glue (any clear-drying craft glue will do)
- Paper of any color; card stock is best for card making

Background:

For centuries, botanists, artists, and hobbyists have enjoyed the art of pressing and drying plants. At Longwood Gardens we maintain a herbarium, an organized collection of preserved plant specimens. Our herbarium is comprised of almost 12,000 pressed and dried plant specimens. These specimens have mostly been collected in the gardens, greenhouses, and natural lands of Longwood, as well as on plant exploration expeditions around the world. In addition to the scientific importance of pressing and drying plants, pressed plant material can also be beautiful and is easy to create at home with a few simple supplies!

Making Your Greeting Cards:

This is where your creativity will shine! Here are a few helpful tips to keep in mind:

- Arrange your plants on the paper before you glue them to get an idea for layout.
- Use wax paper to protect your working surface and to keep your plants from sticking to everything except your greeting card!
- Use glue sparingly; you won't need as much as you think.
- Use tweezers to transfer glued plant material onto your paper.

Once all your cards are finished, you may layer the cards with wax paper and let them dry overnight under a heavy book. Share your handmade greeting cards with friends and family and enjoy the process of creating pieces of artwork from your garden, that will long outlast the temporary blooms of spring and summer!

