

PRESS - How to collect and preserve your local flowers

We're making an Herbarium!

Flower pressing dates back all the way to the time of the ancient Egyptians and is a SUPER COOL way to preserve (meaning to save for a long time) examples of plants that would otherwise decompose.

By pushing all of the moisture out of a plant soon after you've picked it you can make it dry enough to save the colour and the shape. It is these dried examples or 'specimens' that botanists (plant scientists) can use to understand more about the way that the natural world looks in a particular place in time.

The Bristol Museum and Art Gallery - an incredible place in Clifton that houses local and international history - will be creating a 'Herbarium' from the flower samples that you send in! This herbarium (a scientific collection of plants and flowers) will show people in years to come all of the types of wildflowers that are growing in Emersons Green & Lyde Green today.

Once you've pressed your flowers and made some cyanotype artwork with them, look inside the blue envelope for how to send you specimens in to join the herbarium!

What you need - to collect your local wildflowers

- The wildflower Spotter sheet & Map
- A phone for photos and recording locations
- Scissors/shears and perhaps gloves
- A cardboard press or travel notebook
- A warm sunny day
- A plant identification app (we like to use Pl@ntnet)

Need advice?

We've got a handy video to watch on pressandprint.org

How to collect wild flowers!

- Pack everything you need from the list above
- Collect flowers on a dry day as they will press much better.
- Plan to visit some green spaces near to you or explore somewhere new on the map!
- Take something with you to keep your flowers in as you collect them, we recommend a 'travel press'. You can make one by folding a piece of corrugated cardboard in half and keeping it closed with an elastic band. This will protect your lovely flowers & keep them in shape.
- We're picking wildflowers for this project. If it looks like it was planted or belongs to someone, skip it!
- Use sharp scissors or shears to collect your flower, as a clean cut leaves the rest of the plant healthy.

- Don't pull up the roots of a plant or flower, as it needs these to keep growing. Instead try cutting the stem of the flower (that's the long middle bit) or somewhere above where the flower meets the ground.
- We LOVE wildflowers! We don't want to take too many, just a few to study. Collect just one of each type of flower to send to the museum, or two so that you have one to keep for yourself.
- Keep yourself safe while you are flower collecting, you are the most important specimen. If a plant looks like it might be poisonous, unusually dirty, or in an unsafe place to collect from, then take precautions and keep out of danger. You could check for the species in the PlantNet app, ask help in collecting it or skip that plant and look for another.
- One of the most helpful things you can do is to log the location of where you collect your flowers! So when you find one, take a photograph of where it is and put a little marker on your map. If you have a phone you can use google maps to find out the exact 'co-ordinates' (that means the reference on a global grid) of where the plant was found by dropping a pin, scrolling down, and looking for the pair of numbers that look a bit like this: 51.495066, -2.474375. These are the co-ordinates!
- Take care to save all of the information as you go as it is so easy to forget over time. When you get home is a great time to write down any locations and thoughts or feelings ready to fill out the specimen stickers later on in this pack.

How to press and preserve your flowers

1. Use two of the four pages of blotting paper provided in the kit (these are very absorbent white pieces of A5 paper) and carefully arrange some of your flower collection between them to make a little flower sandwich. Don't forget that the way that you place your flowers is the shape that they will dry in, so have a think about how you would like the petals to be arranged if you like!
2. Find a big heavy book to put your flower/paper sandwich inside of and close the book to press the flowers flat.
3. Find yourself something heavy to rest on top of the book to increase the pressure. Perhaps a brick, a heavy ornament or a vase. Take care to use something sturdy so that it doesn't fall off and place it on top of your book press to push down even more onto the flowers inside.
4. Leave your flowers in your book press for as long as possible. True flower pressing can take up to 6 weeks, but you want to do some crafting before July! So try leaving them for at least 2 weeks before you get creative with the cyanotype activity and make sure they've been pressed for 6 weeks before you send them to the museum.
5. Keep your book press in a warm and dry room if you can and swap out the blotting paper every week so that it can absorb moisture from the pressing plant and for the paper to dry out itself in-between each use (that's why we've packed two pairs of paper). Newspaper works as a good substitute for this if you need more!

When your flowers are fully pressed, they will be fragile but beautiful and if you pressed them soon after picking, they will have kept most of the original colour. Now you can get busy making some art with them before sending one of each flower into the museum.

Pressed your flowers? Then it is time for booklet 2.....

What else can you make with your left over flowers after you have sent one of each type to the museum?

Pressed flower crafts

- Display them as art
- Decorate stationery
- Start your own home herbarium!
- Use edible flowers for food decoration
- Apply them to a lampshade or a vase
- Make a card with them
- Glue them to a candle

What have you pressed? Share your pressed flower creations with us on social media @pressandprintart