

Materials Needed:

- Fresh flowers and leaves (choose ones that are relatively flat, like pansies, violets, ferns, single-petal roses, daisies)
 - Heavy books (like encyclopedias or phone books)
 - Paper towels or absorbent paper (blotting paper works well)
 - Wax paper or parchment paper
 - Optional: A dedicated flower press
 - Tweezers
 - White craft glue (like Elmer's)
 - Cardstock, watercolor paper, or bookmarks
 - Optional: Clear contact paper or sealant (like Mod Podge)
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Introduction: Capturing Nature's Beauty!

Have you ever wished you could keep a beautiful flower forever? Today, we're going to learn a magical way to preserve the beauty of flowers and leaves long after they've been picked. It's called flower pressing! People have been doing this for hundreds of years to study plants, keep memories, and make beautiful art. Let's become nature artists!

Activity 1: Gathering Your Treasures

Let's go on a nature walk (in your garden or neighborhood, with permission!) or look at flowers you might already have. Gently collect some flowers and leaves that catch your eye. Look for flowers that aren't too thick or bulky. Flat flowers like pansies, violets, and cosmos, along with ferns and interesting leaves, work best. Avoid flowers right after rain; they should be dry.

Activity 2: The Pressing Process

There are a few ways to press our treasures:

1. Book Pressing Method:

1. Open a heavy book towards the middle.
2. Place a sheet of paper towel or blotting paper on the right-hand page.
3. Arrange your flowers and leaves on the paper, making sure they don't overlap unless you want them pressed together.
4. Cover the flowers carefully with another sheet of paper towel or blotting paper.
5. Carefully close the book.
6. You can add more layers of flowers and paper every 10 pages or so in the same book.
7. Stack more heavy books or objects on top for extra weight.

2. Flower Press Method (If you have one):

1. Unscrew the bolts and remove the top layer of wood and cardboard/paper.
2. Place a sheet of paper on the cardboard.
3. Arrange your flowers on the paper.
4. Cover with another sheet of paper and then a piece of cardboard.
5. Repeat layers as needed.
6. Place the top wooden layer back on and tighten the screws evenly.

Important Tip: Change the absorbent paper every few days for the first week to help prevent mold and speed up drying.

Activity 3: The Waiting Game

Now comes the hardest part: waiting! Pressed flowers need time to flatten and dry completely. This usually takes 2-4 weeks. Keep your book press or flower press in a warm, dry place away from direct sunlight. Patience is key in art – good things take time!

Activity 4: Creating Your Masterpiece!

Once your flowers are dry and papery thin, it's time to create! Carefully remove them using tweezers – they are very delicate.

1. Choose your background: cardstock for a card, a bookmark shape, or watercolor paper for a picture.
2. Plan your design. Arrange the flowers and leaves on the paper without gluing first until you like how it looks.
3. Apply tiny dots of white glue to the back of the pressed flowers/leaves using a toothpick or the fine tip of the glue bottle.
4. Gently press them onto your paper background.
5. Let the glue dry completely.
6. Optional: You can seal your artwork by carefully applying clear contact paper over it or brushing on a thin layer of sealant like Mod Podge.

Conclusion: Nature Art Showcase!

Look at your beautiful creation! You've taken delicate flowers from nature and turned them into lasting art. What was your favorite part of the process? What other things could you make with pressed flowers? (Ideas: decorate a journal, a phone case, make jewelry pendants). Share your artwork and tell someone about how you made it!