

## How to Press Flowers

Unlike a bouquet of dried flowers, pressed flowers are perfect for framing, placing inside a locket, or using as adornments for note cards. Here's how to make your own pressed flowers.

### Selecting Flowers for Pressing

Pick flowers in the morning after dew has evaporated. Harvest them when they are ready to open their buds or just before their peak. If you plan to create framed pressed-flower art, collect blooms and foliage at various stages of development to give your design a natural look. The better the quality of the blooms at picking time, the better they will look when dried and pressed.



The easiest flowers to press are those with naturally flat blooms such as violets, daisies, and single-petal roses (many types of shrub roses are good choices). If you are pressing flowers with obvious stamens, such as alstroemerias and lilies, remove the stamens so the pollen won't stain. Ferns and various types of leaves also flatten nicely. You can dry chunky flowers such as multi-petal roses or carnations (or even fruits and vegetables), but they will take longer and require a bit more attention.

### Materials for Flower Pressing

You can use newspaper, printer paper, flat cardboard, or plain, untreated facial tissues to absorb moisture and aid drying. Your goal is to dry flowers as quickly as possible to prevent browning. Avoid paper towels because their textures may be imprinted on the petals. Also avoid waxed paper because it retains moisture. Experiment with pressing techniques to discover which one works best for you and the flowers you choose. Trial and error will also show you how to place the blooms on the paper so they look their best when pressed.

The easiest method of flower pressing requires no special equipment other than absorbent paper and a heavy book or phone book. Pigments in the petals, stems, and leaves may stain the paper; so if the book is valuable, protect the pages with a layer of paper on each side of the plants being pressed.

There are two ways to press using this technique. Start by placing the flowers between two layers of absorbent paper, then placing heavy books on top. Or place the flowers between the pages of the book itself, leaving at least 1/8 inch between multiple pressings. Weigh down the top of the book with a brick or other heavy item. Let the flowers dry for a week before checking on them. At that point you may want to replace the absorbent material. Allow two to three weeks for complete drying.

### Pressed Flower Technique: Ironing

You need the flowers to be as dry as possible before you get started. Pat them down on a paper towel if there is dew on the leaves. Then, place the flowers on a piece of parchment paper. Place another piece of parchment paper on top. Now, sandwich that between two paper towels or pieces of cloth. Turn off the steam function on your iron and set it to medium-high heat. Iron the flowers by pressing the iron on them for about ten seconds. Continue to iron them at ten to fifteen second intervals for about three minutes. You don't want to iron these flowers like you would a t-shirt, instead you want to lift and press.

The amount of time depends on each flower. Iron the flowers until they are completely dry. Let cool and then you are ready to craft!

### Pressed Flower Technique: Microwaving

Several kinds of microwave flower presses are available online and in craft stores. The advantages of these are that you get a finished product in minutes and the colors can be more vibrant than traditional pressing. Select and arrange flowers and leaves following the instructions above with one important exception. Since different thicknesses and moisture levels require more or less drying, it is best to microwave one type of flower or leaf at a time. Place the microwave press in your microwave oven and start with 30 to 60 second bursts at half power. Open the press after each burst to allow the steam to escape, let the plant materials cool, and to check progress. Be careful not to burn the plant material or yourself! Repeat until the flowers and leaves are dry.

You can also make a microwave flower press using two ceramic tiles (unglazed or glazed with non-metallic paint). Place the flowers and leaves to be dried between sheets of copy paper, add a layer of absorbent paper between the copy paper and the tiles, and then proceed as above.

Written by Frederick County Master Gardeners.