Pressing Plant Specimens At Home

Pressing plants at home is an easy activity and a fun way to learn more about the plants in your yard or neighborhood.

**Supplies needed:**  • Plants  • Paper  • Heavy books  • Cardboard (optional)

**Collecting the Plants**
Any or all parts of a plant can make a good pressing – a stem with flowers and leaves, leaves found on the ground, or just a flower. Make sure you collect from places where you have permission (your yard) or it’s ok to collect (any public access way).

If you are interested in identifying the plant, this is easier when it is fresh. Taking photos of the plant “in situ”, or where it is originally, gives you a record of the type of environment where the plant was growing. Plant identification books or apps such as iNaturalist can help you identify the specimen.

**Pressing the Plants**
There are two key aspects to pressing plants effectively:
- removing moisture from the plant
- flattening it with evenly distributed weight

**Removing the moisture.**
Pressing your plant between pieces of paper helps remove the moisture from the plant during the pressing process. Sandwich your plant specimen between two sheets of paper. It can be folded or two separate sheets, it can be newspaper, blotting paper, or printer paper—just make sure the paper covers the plant entirely.

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Flattening the plant.
Having an evenly distributed weight across your plant is key. A plant press is really just sheets of cardboard interleaved with paper, book-ended with boards and tied together with adjustable straps. You can make these pretty easily if you plan to do lots of plant pressing. Here’s an example of a plant press:

If you don’t have a plant press, no worries! You can place the papered plants within a heavy book or in between two pieces of cardboard. You want to ensure enough weight is applied to evenly flatten the plants, so stack a couple of heavy books on top.

Allow 1-2 weeks for the plants to completely dry.

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