

EDUCATION

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You need:

- A container to bring home the flowers (a biscuit tin or a plastic lunch box)
 - Absorbent paper e.g. blotting paper
 - A flower press or heavy books
 - A scrapbook or folder
1. Pick flowers as low down as possible so that you can get examples of the lower leaves, but do not dig up the roots. Thicker stems can be cut with scissors to prevent damage to the plant.
 2. To keep them as uncrushed as possible while taking them home, place them in a container and keep them moist and out of sunlight (you can use a botanist's vasculum).
 3. When home keep the plants fresh until you press them. Cut the ends of the stems and place in fresh water in a tail vase to support them.
 4. To press the flowers, place between sheets of absorbent paper and apply sufficient pressure to dry them out. You can buy specially made plant presses from biological supply companies. These are usually made of wire mesh, which allows the moisture to escape rapidly. You can however make you own press with two sheets of plywood with a few holes drilled in them for ventilation and tied with an old belt to apply the pressure. You can also improvise with heavy books or bricks.
 5. When placing your flowers on the absorbent paper turn the leaves so that you can see the upper surface of one and the lower surface of another.
 6. Leave the press in a warm room for a few days. Bulkier, fleshy specimens might need several changes of absorbent paper before all the moisture has been absorbed.

The time needed to dry the specimens depends on the amount of water in them to start with and the temperature of the room, but you can usually remove them from the press after about 3 weeks.

PLYWOOD AND WIRE PRESSES



Attach the pressed specimens onto sheets of white paper or thin card, with clear plastic tape. Label the plants common and scientific name and a brief description of the type of habitat you found it.

Store the sheets dry and flat in a way that protects them from breakage.

REMEMBER

Only pick flowers of commoner species. It is the flowers that produce seeds and without seeds there can be no future generation of flowers. Widespread picking of flowers seriously threatens seed production.

Many wild plants are protected species because of their rarity. It is an offence to pick any of these. A list of protected plants can be found in the NIEA publication 'The Wildlife Law and You'

There are many books to help you identify wild flowers:

British Wild Flowers (pub. Ladybird)

The Nature Trail Book of Wild Flowers by S Tarsky (pub. Usborne)

Piccolo Spotter Wild Flowers by B Press (pub. Piccolo)

Spotter's Guide to Wild Flowers by C Humphries (pub. Usborne)



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