

Be a Botanist: Make Herbarium Sheets

Botany, the study of plants, is a very important field of science. Many of the medicines we use, as well as most of the foods we eat, come from plants. Botanists cannot go into the field to study every single kind of plant from all over the world so they create an herbarium, which is a kind of plant library. The herbarium library is composed of sheets of paper holding a plant that has been dried and glued onto the paper. Each plant is labeled so that the botanist can study that plant at any time. In this activity we are going to press and dry a flower and then make our own herbarium sheet!



What You Need:

- 1 11" x 16" sheet of heavy card stock
- Printer paper
- Plant (It can be any plant but make it's small enough to fit onto your paper and that you get some of the root system. Note: If you collect your plant in the wild, be careful not to collect a protected species and make sure you have permission.)
- Pen
- Pencil
- Glue
- Newspapers
- Heavy books

What You Do:

1. Place the plant between two sheets of newspaper and in between some heavy books. Stack more heavy books on top. This process will press your flower and dry it out, and can take up to a week or more.
2. When your flower is pressed, remove it from the newsprint and carefully glue it to the 11x16 paper. Have the paper go the long way (16") so that you have plenty of room for your plant.
3. Take your printer paper, cut a 3" x 4" piece of paper and glue this onto the bottom right corner of your herbarium sheet. On this piece of paper write:
 - Specimen: (See if you can find the Latin name in a flower book)
 - Collector: (your name)
 - Where it was collected:
 - When it was collected:
4. To make it more complete, label your flower parts with a pencil. See if you can identify the stem, leaf, petals, pistil, stamen and root. When you are done you will have a beautiful piece of art and a valuable piece of science. Continue to make sheets and then hole-punch them to make an herbarium book.