

My Productive Garden: Crafting

Preserving Your Garden Flowers

Drying flowers is one of the simplest, and most enjoyable pastimes. You can create many different crafts from the flowers you dry such as pictures, wreaths, bouquets, candles, the list goes on and on. In this session we will explore several techniques, but all have the same end goal – encouraging the moisture found in living flowers to leave so we may enjoy their beauty beyond the natural bloom time.

The technique you use will depend on the results you want to achieve and the amount of time you have to achieve them. Different varieties of flowers will dry with numerous variations.

The first step in drying flowers is harvesting. As a rule, it is best to harvest in the late morning on a sunny day after the dew has evaporated but the flower is still turgid. Keep in water until time to dry.

Techniques:

A. Air drying

With this method the flower's moisture gently evaporates into the air. Choose a place that is not exposed to sunlight or excess moisture. The oldest form of air drying is simply securing several stems of the same flower and hanging them upside down to prevent the drooping of leaves and flowers. Another method involves spreading blooms or leaves on a wire screen that has been placed to allow ventilation on all sides. This method can take weeks.

Flowers suitable for air drying upright: acanthus, eucalyptus, gypsophila, hydrangea

B. Desiccants

Desiccants are moisture-absorbing substances such as silica gel. Sand, borax, cornmeal, kitty litter have also been used but the silica gel is lightweight and less likely to crush delicate petals. Check your blooms every 3 days for dryness and remove them as soon as they are done. The time is determined by how large the flowers, how densely packed the petals, and how large and dense each petal. Silica gel can be used over and over.

Place a layer of silica gel in the bottom of your container, place flowers leaving a space between and slowly pour or spoon silica gel making sure it gets between the petals by tapping container from side to side or using the end of a brush to push particles under petals. Cover each bloom completely. If you want to use the dried flower in an arrangement you should attach florist wire and pick before drying. Long spikey flowers can be dried on their side. You can always use hot glue to attach petals that come loose or repair damage.

Flowers suitable for drying using desiccants: rose, peony, zinnia, delphinium, small dahlia, freesia, lily, narcissus, larkspur, ranunculus, anemone, camellia, orchid, daisy

C. Pressing

Still one of the most effective and easiest methods. Remove foliage and blooms from the stems and arrange upside down on blotting paper with space between each material. Double check that petals are not folded, then cover with another sheet of blotting paper. Place them in a flower press or between two large books. This method takes 2 or more weeks. You can also use paper towel between blooms. You can use the paper again and again after letting it thoroughly dry out.

Flowers suitable for pressing: pansy, hellebore, freesia, nicotiana, ferns and most foliage, hosta, primula, clematis, snowdrop, freesia, lily

D. Microwave Drying

The fastest but most unpredictable method! Flowers can be dried between paper towels or in a paper bag. Place the blooms on a paper towel as if you were pressing them. You can use ceramic tiles or plates to press them down. Place a bloom in a paper bag if you do not want it pressed. Check the blooms after 2 minutes on 50% power and continue to check often until dry.

E. Glycerin

Place individual flowers or sprigs in a mixture of 40% glycerin and 60% hot water to cover 3 – 4 inches at base. Remove lower leaves on the stem and cut base of stem at a sharp angle to allow more surface area. Hardwood stems can be split. Keep in a cool dark place, checking after about a week. The plant material remains supple but the color changes substantially to a khaki or fawny brown.

Flowers suitable for drying with glycerin: hydrangea, eucalyptus, moluccella, ivy, magnolia leaves, mahonia leaves, aspidistra leaves, laurel, heather

The Meaning of Flowers

From The Art of Dried Flowers by Rob and Lucy Wood

Amaranth – Immortality, constancy	Marigold, grief, pain
Ambrosia – Love returned	Marjoram – Blushing shyness
Angelica – Inspiration	Mint - Virtue
Apple – Temptation	Money Plant - Honesty
Azalea – Temperance	Moss – Maternal love
Basil – Hatred, token of love	Mum, Yellow – Slighted truth
Bay Laurel – Glory	Myrtle - love
Beech – Prosperity	Nasturtium - Passion
Birch – Meekness, grace	Nigella - Perplexity
Borage, Bluntness, courage	Oak Leaf - Bravery
Boxwood, Stoicism	Oats - Music
Camomile – Energy in adversity	Olive - Peace
Carnation – Fascination	Orange - Chastity
Coreopsis – Cheerfulness	Palm - Victory
Coriander – Concealed merit	Pansy - Thoughts
Dahlia – Instability	Peony - Shame
Daisy – Innocence, purity	Phlox - Unanimity
Dogwood – Durability	Pink (Dianthus) - Boldness
Fennel – Force, strength	Poppy, Red - Consolation
Fern – Sincerity	Primrose – Early youth
Flax – Industry	Raspberry - Remorse
Foxglove- Insincerity	Rose, Red - Desire
Geranium – Gentility	Rose, White – Silence, Innocence
Goldenrod – Encouragement	Rose – Love, beauty
Grass – Submission	Rosemary – Remembrance, devotion
Hawthorn – Hope	Rudbeckia - Justice
Hibiscus – Delicate Beauty	Rue - Disdain

Preserving Your Garden Flowers

Holly – Foresight

Hyssop – Cleanliness

Iris – My compliments

Ivy – Friendship

Juniper – Protection

Lady's Slipper – Fickleness

Larkspur – Swiftiness, levity

Lavender – Distrust, sweetness

Lilac, White – modesty

Lily, Day – Coquetry

Magnolia – Love of nature

Maple – Reserve

Sage – Good health, esteem

Strawberry - Perfection

Sweet Pea - Departure

Tansy – I am against you

Thyme - Activity

Tulip - Fame

Veronica - Fidelity

Violet – Faithfulness, simplicity

Woodruff – Modest worth

Yarrow - War

Yew - Sadness

Zinnia – Thoughts of absent friends

Instructions for Making your Spring Dried Flower Ornament

1. You can choose to use a bisque fired disc or natural wood as the base for your ornament.
2. If you would like to write a word, verse, etc. on one side do that first.
3. Choose the dried flowers you want to use and place them on the surface of your disc to make the design you want. Once you have your design, place them to the side.
4. Using a brush, apply the Mod-Podge evenly and thinly over the entire surface.
5. Gently place dried flowers on the glue using the wooden picks to help place and flatten them into the design you want.
6. Apply another layer of Mod-Podge over the design brushing from center of flower to edge. You may need to use the pick to hold the flower in place while you brush over it. Make sure all parts of the design are covered with the glue being careful to keep it from getting too thick. Allow about 10 minutes to dry. If you have time, you can make a design on both sides.
7. While this dries, choose your ribbon and attach to your ornament.
8. If the glue is still tacky, wrap the ornament loosely in the parchment paper.