

## PRESSED FLOWERS

Flower pressing is one of the oldest methods of preserving the garden's bounty and probably the easiest next to air drying. These long cold days of winter may seem like a strange time to think of pressing flowers but now is actually the perfect time to plan your gardens for the upcoming growing season. If you have the space, time and inclination, a cutting garden would be ideal. This would provide enough flowers for drying & pressing as well as for fresh cut use around the home. For the average gardener, however, it is simple enough to include a few plants throughout the garden that are suitable for this purpose. The trick is to plant enough of each particular variety to provide a decent harvest of flowers for pressing while still leaving enough to enjoy in the garden. Rather than planting in groups of three, for example, simply plant in groups of 6-10. Many garden flowers are suitable for pressing. Generally those with thin petals such as pansies are good candidates. Thick or fleshy flowers and leaves such as succulents, are best avoided. Roses can be used but you must remove all the petals, dry them separately and reassemble them. This sounds like a lot of work and it is but the finished effect is quite beautiful. The same can be done with wisteria & hydrangea blooms. The plant material to be used should ideally be collected late in the morning after the dew has dried off the leaves & petals. For best results, pick blooms that are just at their peak when the colours are most vibrant.

As with other drying methods some flowers keep their colour much better than others. Generally blues, reds, and autumnal tones last much longer - often for many years - under ideal conditions. Flowers with pale pink, peachy tones and cream or white flowers all tend to quickly fade to tan or beige tones. Some of the best perennials for pressing include delphinium grandiflorum, coral bells, aquilegia, bell flowers, baby's breath and lavender. Many annuals such as morning glory and sweet pea, leaves and greenery of all kinds and even weeds such as Queen Annes Lace are just a small selection of flowers that can be used. Regardless of the plant material used, the basic technique is the same. Pressing the petals and leaves etc between layers of absorbent material etc. eventually dries them out. As children we've all dried leaves between the pages of phone books. Simple wooden flower presses can also be easily and inexpensively made or purchased. The newest and fastest method involves using a specially-made clay flower press in a microwave oven.

Experimenting with different pressing methods and types of plant material will open a whole new world of creativity. The sky's the limit. Pressed blooms can be used to embellish everything from lamp shades and furniture to cards and notepaper. Beautiful pressed 'bouquets' can even be assembled, mounted into picture frame and hung on a wall. What a wonderful way to preserve and share your garden with friends and loved ones. For more info on this topic and a free list of flowers & plants suitable for pressing, visit The Cedar Rose located just outside Sauble Beach - [www.cedarose.ca](http://www.cedarose.ca)

... Annette, February

