

Make your own herbarium

ACTIVITY

What to expect

Ages: Ideal for students in Grades 5-12

Objective: Learn about local plants by creating your own herbarium of dried plant specimens

Materials needed

- Two pieces of cardboard
- Old newspaper or papers
- Glue
- A couple of heavy books
- Plant samples you'll collect (instructions on how to do this below)

INTRODUCTION

What is a herbarium?

A herbarium is a collection of dried and preserved plants. Scientists use herbariums to study plants for conservation and research. They are a wonderful catalog of biodiversity and can be used for years after their collection. The good thing about a herbarium is that you only need a few samples to research a lot of information about a species. Keeping a catalog of plants can give future humans insight into the plants that grew in our regions. We still use herbarium specimens from the 1600s!



INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Collecting your samples

Before collecting any samples, there are a few things you should consider. Some plants might be poisonous, dangerous, or illegal to harvest. So, it is important to have a local plant guide to ensure you know what species you are gathering. We recommend *Plants of Coastal British Columbia* by Jim Pojar and Andy McKinnon.

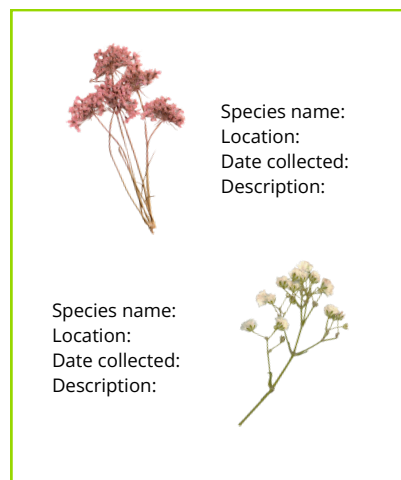
We also want to make sure we're not harming the ecosystem by picking rare plants or overharvesting. You should only collect plants in a spot you have permission to do so, and pick a single specimen of a common and abundant species. To harvest ethically, one tip is to collect a plant you know well and see often! To start off, you could pick a plant from your home garden, that you might have helped take care of or grow.

Step 2: Drying your samples

1. Drying these plants can take a long time, at least a week! To set up your DIY plant press, find a warm, dry spot where the plants won't be disturbed.
2. Lay some cardboard out flat to act as your base. This will help ensure all the water gets removed.
3. Place about 10 layers of newspaper or old paper above and below your plant.
4. Add another piece of cardboard on top, so that your plant is sandwiched between the cardboard and paper.
5. Place some heavy books on top of the set up. This will flatten and preserve your sample.
6. Now, wait! Your plant should feel very dry after a week. If it still feels damp, then continue drying for another week.

Step 3: Mounting your samples

1. Use glue to attach your dried plant to a piece of paper. Your specimen is fragile so handle it with care.
2. Label your herbarium specimen. You can use the next page to glue your plant and write about it. Below you can find some examples of layouts if you need inspiration. Get creative with it!



Example layouts. You can get as creative as you want with how you mount your specimens!

SPECIES NAME:

LOCATION:

DATE COLLECTED:

DESCRIPTION: