



Build a Plant Press

And preserve your favorite flowers

Plant presses are used to dry and preserve plants by flattening them. Presses were used by early explorers and naturalists to collect and preserve new species of plants. Today, people press plants to use in many creative ways, like in jewelry and bookmarks.



Materials Needed

- Wood—3/4—1 inch thick, enough to make two squares of equal size
- Pencil
- Measuring tape
- Drill
- 5/16 inch drill bit
- 4—1/4 inch bolts
- Sandpaper
- Stain and/or paint
- Cardboard
- White paper
- Scissors
- 4 washers
- 4 wing nuts

To Build a Plant Press

1. Cut two wood squares to the size you want.
2. Measure 1 inch in from each corner on your boards and mark the spots where you will drill.
3. Drill your holes. Make sure your holes line up on both boards.
4. Sand the wood, especially around the holes that you just drilled, to make sure that the wood is smooth.
5. Stain or paint your wood if you want. Make it fancy!
6. Cut two pieces each of cardboard and white paper, cutting them just smaller than your wooden boards.
7. Cut triangles from the each corner of the cardboard and paper so that they sit inside the bolts when stacked together.
8. Place one piece of plywood on the bolts, with the head of the bolts on the bottom.
9. Add a one of your pieces of cardboard onto the bolted wood, then two pieces of white paper and followed with the last piece of cardboard. You can add as many layers as will fit onto your board.
10. Now, add the last board onto the bolts. Add the washers onto the bolts, then top with a wing nut and tighten until it is secure. You don't want it too tight since you will be removing them to add flowers.

Ask A Naturalist

Make sure you know the rules and regulations for collecting on the property you are at *before* you start collecting plants. Many state and federal properties do not allow you to pick plants—so know before you go! The best time is in the morning after the dew has dried. Pick plants in a variety of stages—from bud to full bloom. The best pressed plants are flat like daisies and not bulky like a rose. Ferns, leaves and grasses are also fun to press. Once you pick your flowers, loosen the wing nuts enough to lift the board, cardboard and paper. Place your flowers (not touching each other) gently on the white paper and place the upper sheet of white paper and cardboard back down. Lower the top board and tighten the wing nuts again. Leave for at least three weeks to allow the flowers time to completely dry. Display or create with your pressed flowers after three weeks.