

# Inspirations from the Forest

## Art Adventure: Pressed Leaf and Flower Art

**Start collecting leaves and small flowers when you are going to school, walking your dog, or hiking on a nature trail. Just watch out for poison ivy!**

*These step-by-step instructions were provided by Ruth Pectorius, an artist who has worked with pressed flowers for more than twenty years.*

TIP: If you are not sure what some of these plants look like, search online or refer to a field guide on plants in your region.

**Step 1: Find suitable leaves and flowers.** The best time to look for specimens is on a dry, sunny day. Avoid plants that are damp from rain or dew, as they will become moldy if you try to press them. Process the leaves and flowers you have found by trimming off any loose ends, breaking down big clumps, and sorting them by color or type.

Next you need to press and dry them. This will make them flat and easier to use in art projects.

**Step 2: Press the leaves and flowers.** Craft stores sell fancy flower presses, but a heavy book also works well. Open the book to a page near the middle. First lay down a piece of regular facial tissue, then the leaf or flower, then another piece of tissue. Carefully close the book. Make sure not to crowd or overlap your flowers. If you have too many, skip through about an inch of the book, and place some more on a new page. To increase the weight, put additional books on top.

**Step 3: Wait for the plants to dry.** It will take one to two weeks for the leaves and flowers to dry out completely. Be patient!

**Step 4: Remove and organize the dried plants.** After one or two weeks, carefully take out the plants and leaves and organize them by color, type of leaf or flower, etc.

**Step 5: Lay out your design.** Use tweezers to hold the dried flowers and leaves. Arrange them in different patterns to see what looks best BEFORE you glue. Be careful; the leaves and flowers are very delicate when they are dry.

**Step 6: Glue the dried plants in place.** You can create an original design or a border using the dried flowers and plants. Select handmade paper, card stock, antique postcards, or bookmarks as the backing for your dried flower art. These make unique and treasured gifts! Use toothpicks to apply glue. Apply the smallest amount possible to avoid globs. A white glue works well.

**Step 7: Protect your artwork.** Use laminating adhesive plastic (available at craft or office supply stores) to protect your artwork, or put it under glass in a frame.