LA COUNTY LIBRARY

Activity Idea

PRESSED FLOWERS

Create a Piece of Artwork or Start a Specimen Book

Recommended for Ages 12 – 18 years

Why Press Flowers?

Pressing flowers allows you to create a one-of-a-kind piece of artwork you can keep or give to someone else. More importantly it allows you to explore your neighborhood and community, and keep a record of the flowers and plants you come across.

What You'll Need:

- Scissors
- Paper towel, coffee filter, thin cardboard, or other type of absorbent material
- Optional: a large book you no longer care about such as a phone book or dictionary (not a library book, please!)
- Optional: one or two heavy items

How to:

- Take a walk outside and be observant. Notice the botanicals around you: trees, flowers, plants, shrubs, grasses, etc.
- Use your scissors to cut leaves, flower buds, flowers with stems, whatever you see that you like. Don't cut too many! Respect what nature gives you and leave alone what you don't think you'll need.
- If using a book, open it to about the middle and place the absorbent material over the pages.
- Prepare your cuttings by removing any unwanted leaves or damaged areas.
- Then, place your flowers, leaves, etc. on the right side of the absorbent material. Remember to give each item space around it.

- Fold the absorbent material over your cuttings and close the book.
- If the book is heavy enough, it can be left alone. If it isn't heavy enough, place weighted objects on top of the book such as exercise weights, other books, etc. During this phase, some color of the specimens will be lost, so keep that in mind.
- The longer you press the cuttings, the less water will be in them. Leave alone for at least 3 days. Depending on the cuttings and their thickness, they may need a longer wait period such as 3-4 weeks. Check on your cuttings and remove when they have a papery feel. If they are still too watery, change out the absorbent material and press again.
- You can now use your dried botanicals to create a piece of art, add them to a botanical specimen journal, or display them in a different way.