

# Create a herbarium

Follow this step-by-step guide to collect, press and record your own plants

## What will I need?

### For collecting

- ☐ Plastic bags
- ☐ Tape measure or ruler
- ☐ Secateurs
- ☐ Labels or sticky notes
- ☐ Pen or pencil

### For pressing

- ☐ Two pieces of hardboard/plywood
- ☐ Newspaper or blotting paper
- ☐ Corrugated card such as old cardboard boxes
- ☐ Bricks, telephone directories or heavy books

### For mounting

- ☐ Thick craft paper or card
- ☐ Labels
- ☐ Tweezers
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ PVA glue
- ☐ Small strips of paper



Download our label templates, or create your own

## Step by step

1

Select a typical plant and if possible a couple of extra flowers to add to the specimen. Make sure the plant is healthy without signs of disease. Carefully cut using secateurs to include as much of the plant as possible.

2

Use a label or sticky note to write down any details about your plant that you will need later, such as its name, measurements and location, and pop the plant specimen in a plastic bag until you are ready to mount.

3

Use our template herbarium labels, or create your own, to record details of your plant: its name, date of collection, collector, site of collection and where you got the plant from. Make a note of other details that may be lost by pressing such as the measurements, scent, and description of leaves, stem and flowers.

4

Make a press with a pair of hardboard or plywood boards. Place some corrugated card on one board, then place two sheets of blotting paper or newspaper on top of this. Arrange your plant material on top.

5

Cover the sample with two further sheets of blotting paper and corrugated card. An absorbent fabric can be useful to help draw out moisture – if using, place it on top of the plant material, with a thin sheet of paper between the plant material and the fabric to prevent sticking.



**Top tip!** Avoid collecting specimens in wet weather, and clean any excess soil from your plant before pressing



**Top tip!** When arranging, try to keep the natural shape and form of your plant

6

Cover the specimen with the top board and place bricks or heavy books on top to keep the press tight. Move to a warm place, such as a drying cabinet, airing cupboard or damp-free room above a radiator.

7

Check your plant specimens after 24 hours, replacing the corrugated card and top layer of blotting paper with dry card. Inspect regularly, at least once a week. Depending on the plant being pressed and the drying conditions, your specimen will be ready anywhere between two days or three weeks.

8

When your specimen is dry, it is ready to be removed from the press and mounted. Good quality craft paper or card, preferably acid-free, is suitable for this. Make sure your paper is large enough to comfortably fit your plant specimen and label.

9

Use PVA glue to attach your specimen to the paper or card. You can also use small strips of paper and glue to secure parts of the plant. Attach the label you wrote previously to the bottom right-hand corner of your paper.

10

To combat pests, place your finished specimen in a sealed plastic bag and freeze it for 72 hours. Regular inspection of your herbarium is also recommended to check for infestation and damage.

A press and straps used by the RHS Herbarium team



Using heavy books to press specimens

