



by Cindy Steele

How to Press & Dry Flowers in Three Minutes!

Welcome back to Puddles' Craft Corner!

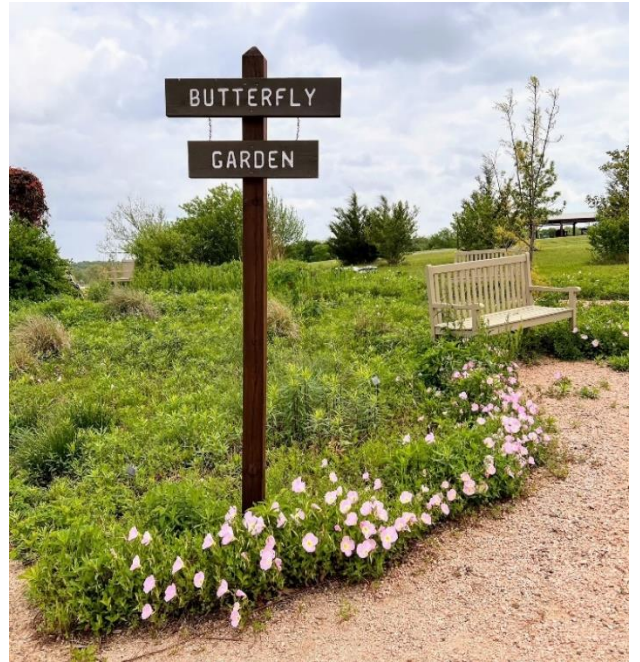
It's that time again! May in our area is a virtual explosion of wildflowers everywhere you look! Just drive out on any road to enjoy all the beautiful roadside beauty! It's fun to drive the backroads and go on a wildflower safari...even taking pictures of all the beautiful, colorful blooms!

It's fun to go on a flower safari...looking and taking pictures but be aware of private land. Don't walk on private property and don't pick flowers on private land.



There are still some Texas Bluebonnets blooming in early May. Look at this beautiful mix of our state flowers with Indian Paintbrush along this quiet backroad.

An even better place to view and photograph lovely native plants and spectacular wildflowers is right here at Hagerman NWR! Take a drive around the refuge to view beautiful patches of wildflowers or park at the visitor center and walk over to the butterfly garden. When it's in bloom this time of year, it's bursting with many colors of native flowers. And an added bonus is all the fluttering butterflies flitting about along with many other pollinators "doing their thing"!



Queen Butterfly Enjoying the Nectar From

You might even have some wildflowers or planted flowers in your yard! It's a short trip to see gorgeous flowers when they're right outside your backdoor.



Now, what do all these amazing wildflowers have to do with our topic? Flowers are beautiful, but they don't last forever...especially if you pick them. You can put them in a glass with water and they will stay pretty for several days, but they will eventually wilt. So, how can we make them last forever...keeping their brilliant colors. We can dry them and press them. How do we do that? There are several ways to dry and press flowers. An easy way is to place them inside a large heavy book and leave them there. But that will take several weeks to a couple of months. Is there a faster way to dry and press flowers? Yes, there is and it's a very easy way...use your microwave. Almost everyone has a microwave in their home. It's great for heating food and drinks, but surprisingly it's a great way to quickly dry flowers and press them into a flat flower that has been dried and is ready to display in lots of different ways! Before we learn how to dry our flowers in the microwave, let's look at a few ways you can use your dried flowers.

How Can We Use Dried Flowers to Make Beautiful Artwork?

1. *Make a Bookmark*

A bookmark is a fun and easy way to use your dried flowers to make something that you can use while reading. You can order clear plastic bookmarks from Amazon.



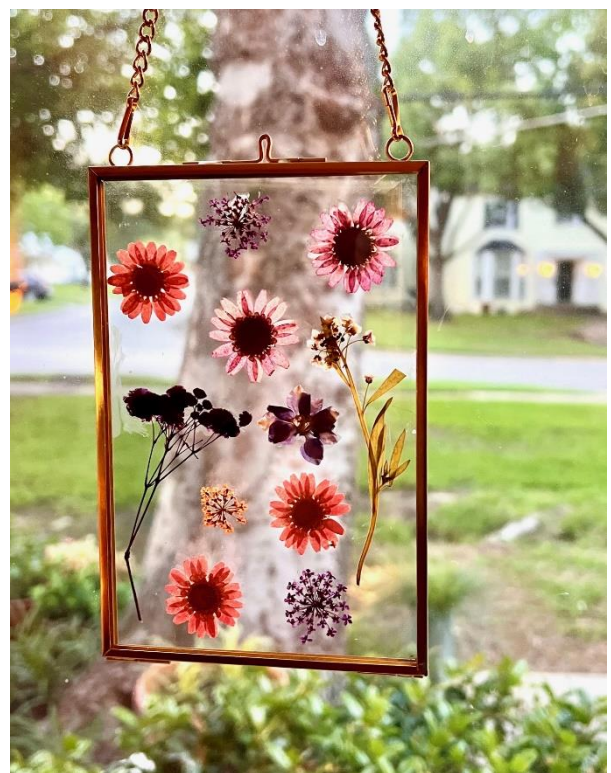
2. Make a Candle Holder

If you have a clear glass candle holder, you can easily decorate it with your dried flowers. Light your candle and watch the flame dance behind your gorgeous flowers.



3. Make a Window Hanging

This craft is so easy and looks beautiful hanging in your window. These frames have pieces of glass and are hinged together. Just open it up, lay out your flowers, dab a of glue on the back of the flowers to keep them in place and close up your frame. Hang it in the window and see how pretty it looks when the sun is shining through.



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Puddles, the Blue Goose, is ready to help us make a fun Earth Day craft that is also a recycling activity. Let's learn how to make our own DIY paper using old scraps of paper and construction paper. Hands-on activities are some of the best ways for kids to learn about something. Hands-on activities allow children to use their senses while learning. They see, touch, and move real objects to complete tasks. This means that science, nature, and more are amazingly brought to life! Children begin to understand the meaning behind what they are doing.

Dried Flower Art



Materials:

1. Flowers to dry (from your yard, a field, the grocery store, ordered already dried from Amazon)
2. Mod Podge
3. Paint brush
4. Tweezers (they really help with picking up the dried flowers)
5. Clear glass candle holder
6. Clear plastic bookmark blank (Amazon)
7. Double glass hanging frame

8. Two ceramic tiles or heavy casserole dish
9. Paper towels
10. Microwave

Directions:

1. Gather materials.



2. One tile will go on the bottom. Lay a paper towel on top of the tile. Cut the stem off the flower. Flatten out the petals and lay them on the paper towel. Place a second paper towel on top of the flowers. Place the second tile on top. The tiles really work well because they get very warm in the microwave and dry out the flowers from the bottom and the top.



3. Place the stack in the microwave and cook for about 2½ minutes. All microwaves are different, so you may need to set it for a little shorter time or a little bit longer. Test it out with one flower. When you take the stack out to check, the tiles will be hot. Use a hot pad to pick them up. Carefully peel off the top paper towel. If the flowers are dry, they won't stick to the paper towel. If they still have some moisture in them, they will stick to the paper towel. If you check them and they are sticking, stop trying to peel off the paper towel, put everything back in the microwave and cook for 30 second intervals and check until done.



4. For the candle holder, paint some Mod Podge on the outside. While the Mod Podge is still wet, place flowers so they stick to the Mod Podge. When dry, paint another layer of Mod Podge over the flowers so they are permanently stuck on the glass. *Try to make your brush strokes as smooth as possible. The Mod Podge will dry clear.





5. For the bookmark, paint a smooth coat of Mod Podge on one side of the clear plastic bookmark. Place the flowers on the bookmark while the Mod Podge is still wet. When dry, paint one more coat of Mod Podge over the flowers to seal your bookmark.





6. For the window hanger, open the frame and arrange your flowers on the glass. Put a small amount of the Mod Podge on the back of the flowers and stick them to the back glass to keep them from sliding.



7. Now, you have a gorgeous window hanging to enjoy!



8. Now look at these amazing dried flower art peieces!



If you would like to take this one step further and learn more about Earth Day and taking care of our while reading a charming children’s book, here are some terrific fiction and fun nonfiction books with beautiful artwork:

What’s Inside a Flower

by Rachel Ignotofsky

Flower Garden

by Eve Bunting

Have You Ever Seen a Flower

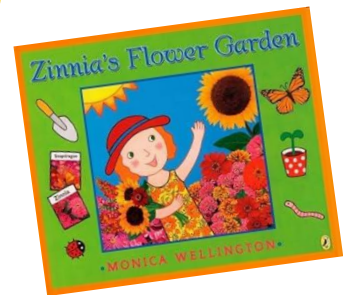
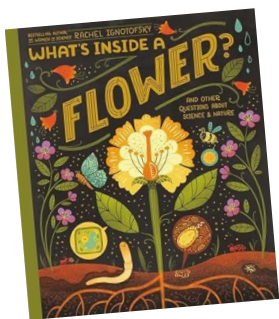
by Shawn Harris

The Reason for a Flower

by Ruth Heller

Zinnia’s Flower Garden

by Monica Wellington



Puddles is excited for next month at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. Check out the June Newsletter for a fun summer craft!

Photos courtesy of Cindy Steele
All Books Listed on Amazon.com