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DRYING AND PRESERVING CUT FLOWERS

Drying flowers can be a lasting reward for those who like to garden. When choosing flowers or greens to preserve, keep the following in mind:

- *Select only the most perfect flowers in various stages of growth.
- *Cut your flower stems on a sunny afternoon.
- *After cutting, immediately submerge the flower stem in water.

There are several methods of preserving flowers. They are:

- *Air Drying.
- *The Dessicant Method.
- *Pressing.
- *The Glycerin Method.



AIR DRYING - Air drying is the easiest method. Flowers or herbs should be loosely bundled together and hung upside down until dry. It is not necessary to remove leaves or stems with this process. Place loose petals and flower heads on newspapers and dry for use in potpourri and sachets. Baby's breath, hydrangea and larger-headed flowers including protea, thistle and other seed pods can be air dried by placing them upright in vases.

THE DESSICANT METHOD - The dessicant method uses drying agents such as silica gel (reusable powder crystals), borax or fine sand. Because dessicants draw moisture from the flowers so quickly, the flowers retain their shape and color better. When using this method, remove flower stems and replace them with wire to create a stem after drying. Place flat flowers such as daisies and asters face down in an airtight container on a 2 inch layer of dessicant and then completely cover them with the drying agent. Roses and other rounded flowers need special attention and should be gently covered with the drying agent so as not to distort their shape. Flowers dried in silica gel will dry in about 2 days depending on the flower. Borax or sand will take longer, but as a general rule, flowers are ready when they feel papery.

PRESSING - Because of its simplicity, pressing is probably the oldest form of preserving flowers. Preserve flowers by pressing them between two sheets of absorbent paper with some weight on top.

THE GLYCERIN METHOD - The glycerin method is often used when drying most types of greens and a few flower varieties. Prepare the solution by combining 1 part glycerin and 2 parts hot water. Cut thinner stems at an angle and use a hammer to split the stalks of heavier stems. Place stems in an open container of the solution for about a week to ten days. The plant material will turn a darker color and will be ready when pliable.

STORING - For best results, store dried flowers in a well ventilated area and out of direct sunlight to prevent fading. Keep them in a covered box or basket until you need them for your special project or crafts.

*Making the world beautiful
one flower at a time.*

