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TACF Fact Sheet

How to Make a Plant Press: *Simple Instructions for Creating this Handy Tool*

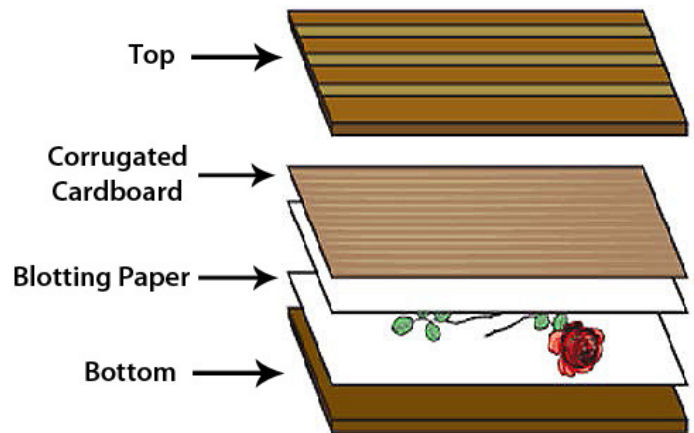
A plant press is a very simple tool used for preserving plant specimens collected in the field. A good press will dry out specimens in a short time, preserve the plant's physical characteristics, and yield a sample that can be stored for a long time. A plant press is a great tool for collecting chestnut leaf samples for species identification or for outreach and educational use.

Instructions

A plant press consists of a wooden frame, corrugated cardboard ventilators (to allow air to flow through the press), and paper to contain the specimen. Blotter paper can also be used to further dry out the plant sample.

You will need:

- Two ½" sheets of wood cut to 12" x 18"
- Several sheets of corrugated cardboard cut to 12" x 18"
- Newspaper or other large sheets of paper
- Two straps with adjustable buckles (~84")
- Blotter paper (optional)
- 11" x 17" herbarium paper (optional; for mounting specimens)



Layering the cardboard and newspaper and/or blotter paper allows you to press many samples at once. Figure courtesy of: <http://scene.asu.edu/habitat/>

First, cut two boards to 12" x 18" dimensions. Next, stack corrugated cardboard (with the ridges lined up cross-wise to promote airflow), newspaper, and blotter paper (if available) in between the boards as shown above. You will sandwich your specimens between sheets of newspaper, blotter paper and cardboard respectively, with the wood providing the outer structure. Finally, wrap the stack with straps and cinch them tightly so your specimen will be nice and flat.

Arranging Plant Specimens

A good specimen will be laid out on the paper in a life-like arrangement, with the lower stem positioned toward the bottom of the sheet and leaves spaced out and pressed flat (not folded). Press the sample tightly until dry, so that it won't shrink or deform. Once the specimen is dried you can mount it on herbarium paper for a professional display or laminate it for educational use.

Additional Tips

Blotter paper can be found at craft stores or through forestry/biology suppliers (check on-line too). Nylon belts or accessory straps for backpacking work great for making your own for a plant press.