

# Preserving flowers



VIKA STRAWBERRIKA/UNSPLASH.COM

Use a heavy book, absorbent paper and parchment or waxed-paper to press dry flowers.

**Question:** My beautiful flowers are slowly succumbing to the cooler fall weather. Is there a simple way to preserve some of them?

**Answer:** Yes, there are many simple ways to preserve the beautiful flowers that you worked so hard to produce in the summer – also, some not-so-simple ways.

Why preserve flowers? The obvious answer is to enjoy their beauty longer with the perk of being maintenance-free. My favorite benefit is that it allows you to make very personal and special one-of-a-kind gifts for your family and friends.

Preserved flowers are perfect for making wreaths, decorations, bouquets, pictures, paperweights, bookmarks, jewelry and more.

There are many preservation methods to choose from, and most preserving methods result in dry flowers. However, using glycerin to preserve them, will result in soft and supple preserved flowers. Let's get started saving those blooms!

**Air Drying:** Cut your stems to the desired length but no shorter than 6 inches. Remove any excess foliage. If you are preserving a bouquet, use twine, rubber bands or gardening wire to tie the stems together. In a well-ventilated area with no direct sunlight, hang upside down to dry for two to three weeks. After flowers are dry, spray with a sealer to protect them and making it easier to clean them.

**Pressing:** This method was commonly used by our grandparents and great grandparents but actually dates back thousands of years. You will need a thick, heavy book (the heavier the better), absorbent paper (cardstock or blotting paper), and parchment or waxed-paper.

Cut the papers to the size of the pages in the book. Layer the absorbent paper, the parchment paper, the flowers, more parchment paper and absorbent paper. Carefully close the book



**Margo Roten**  
Ask a Master Gardener

and place where it will not be disturbed. Add more weight on the book and leave undisturbed for three to four weeks.

**Sand:** You will need a sturdy box and fine sand. Layer a 1/2" of sand in the bottom of the box and place your items to be preserved on top. Carefully pour sand in, over, under and around the items making sure that everything is completely covered. After two weeks carefully remove the flowers from the sand and gently shake or brush to remove any sand that is retained.

**Glycerin:** This is my absolute favorite method of preserving/prolonging a flower's life. You will need vases, glycerin, water, scissors or hand shears. Select healthy flowers with no blemishes. Cut stems to desired length, remove and discard the leaves. Cut the stems of the flowers on a sharp diagonal to maximize uptake of the solution.

However, as with anything, there are other methods to reach the same end. While some preservers recommend cutting a slice part-way up the stem, others believe crushing the bottom of the stem increases absorption. See what works for you.

Place the flowers in your vase and slowly add the glycerin solution of two parts warm water to one part glycerin. Place the flowers in your vase allowing space for airflow around them. It will take two to three weeks for complete absorption.

**Microwave drying:** This method is for drying the blossom of the flower. You will need a microwave-safe container (used exclusively for drying flowers), silica gel crystals and a microwave.

Remove the flowers from the stems. Place 1 inch of silica in the

container and place blossoms face up on the silica. Being careful not to flatten the flowers, pour silica over the blossoms and cover them completely. Place the uncovered container into the microwave and heat on low setting for two minutes. Check the progress. If not dry, you may need two to three more minutes.

When dry, cover the container and let sit for two minutes. Next, remove from the microwave and lift part of the cover to vent. Wait 24 hours then remove gel from petals using a soft brush and a gentle shake. Lightly spray with a protective acrylic spray.

*Do you have a gardening or insect question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu or 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.*



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After the flowers and paper has been layered in the book, place it where it will not be disturbed and leave for three to four weeks