

Plant Printing Instructions:

Project Materials List:

- PVC Pipe
- 2 Sheets of Cover Stock
- 3 Sheets of Mixed Media Paper
- Rubber Bands
- Gloves
- Disposable Aluminum Pot
- 2.5 cups vinegar
- Leaves



Step #1 Gathering Leaves

Making plant impressions on paper is easy, but every plant is different. How the leaves print depends on how much tannin and dye is in the leaf. The vinegar is a fixative and the aluminum and tannin works as a mordant. SCIENCE! 🧑🏻‍🔬🍷 Some leaves have more tannin and dye when they are green, some have more in autumn, and they all leave different shades on the paper. Some leaves don't print at all. 😞

Gather enough leaves to layout on you pages. (Enough to fill a gallon-sized ziplock is a good amount.) Look for different shapes and sizes. Dried fallen leaves work just as well as fresh leaves as long as both lay flat.

Some tips to searching:

- Look for leaves that don't have a waxy coating. (House plants and plants like ivy don't leave an impression.)
- Make sure they aren't too thick, crinkled up, or cupped. (You want them to press nice and flat in between the sheets of paper.)
- Look for leaves that have well defined veins. (Leaves from the maple family work great!)
- You can never go wrong with eucalyptus leaves (thin, oblong, dollar-shaped, they all make great prints!)

Etiquette Note: *Be respectful. Don't take leaves from neighbors' plants and trees without permission or trespass to gather them. Leaves in your own yard or "found" leaves that have fallen below a tree are fair game, though!*



Step #2 Soaking Leaves

Put your leaves in a shallow Tupperware container, casserole dish, or similar. Cover them with water and two cups of vinegar. You only need enough liquid to submerge the leaves. Don't worry if they float to the top, it will still work. **Soak them for one hour.**

Step #3 Preparing Prints

- **First, put on your gloves!**
- **Layout the leaves**

You have 8 sheets of plain paper in your kit, two thick cardstock pieces and six thinner mixed media sheets. Lay one sheet of the cardstock down and layer leaves directly from the bath on top of it. Clip or pinch off any long stems on the leaves before placing them on the paper.

You can arrange them in any pattern you wish. More leaves are better, because there will be more tannin and therefore more color and sharper impressions from the leaves. Be creative! Try to imagine what they might look like once they are printed as you lay them out.

**Hint: The earth side of the leaf (the side that faces the ground) makes the best impression. Try making sure all your leaves are placed on the paper facing the same way. That way you can make sure you get one side of each paper that has the best print possible.*



Once you have the leaves the way you want them on the first piece of cardstock, place a piece of mixed media paper on top of it. This paper is slightly smaller, so center it as best you can. Then layer more leaves on top of it. Repeat with each piece of mixed media paper. When you are out of the thin sheets, lay the remaining sheet of cardstock on top of this last set of leaves.

- **Line up the edges of the paper so that it's a neat stack.**
- **Trim any leaves that are hanging off the edge of the paper stack.**
- **Next, take your piece of PVC pipe and carefully roll the bundle around it.** Start at one end of the stack and roll toward the other end, keeping the paper as tight and flat as you can.
- **Use the rubber bands in the kit to secure the paper around the pipe.** Two rubber bands, each wrapped around the pipe twice should be enough. Take care not to rip the paper when you put place the bands.

Step #4 Simmering Prints

Pour ½ cup of vinegar into aluminum pot, add water until the pot is ¾ full. Place your roll of prints in the water and bring to a boil on the stove. Turn down to low heat and simmer for 45 minutes. Turn off heat and let it sit for 10 minutes.

Tips:

- **Use hot pads to take off the lid. It gets hot!**
- **Turn on the fan in the kitchen and keep the area well ventilated.**
- **Keep an eye on the pot. You don't want to let the water boil out.**



Step #5 Unveiling Prints

Remove prints from pan with tongs, draining out any excess water, and then let them cool in sink.

Place paper towels or old kitchen towels on the counter to place wet prints on. The towels will get stained by the mordant, so don't use good towels for this.

Carefully unroll your prints on a towel at the edge of the sink. Then peel one sheet off carefully, mindful not to tear it. Peel off any leaves sticking to the sheet and rinse it under a drizzle of water from the sink faucet to remove any debris that remains. Lay the print flat on the towels.

Peel off the next sheet and repeat until done.

Tips:

- *It helps to have a trash can next to you to throw away the cooked leaves as you go.*
- *Blot the drying prints with a paper towel to soak up excess water and for faster drying*
- *Don't let the prints overlap as they dry or some dye will transfer between the prints*

Step #6 Drying and Pressing Prints

Leave prints laid out to dry until they are slightly damp

Press prints between a flat surface and a stack of books or something else flat and heavy overnight so that they dry flat.