

Make Your Own

Plant Press



Create artifacts, displays, stationary,
classroom materials, use in science center

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Plant Press



Materials:

- 2 square pieces of pine shelving—8"–10" is a good size. You can make two presses from one 4' length, or four presses from an 8' length
- 2–4 C clamps
- 4 3 inch machine bolts, size 5/16 (or similar)
- 4 wingnuts, size 5/16 (or similar)
- 8 washers to fit bolt
- cardboard box, heavy tag, or railroad board
- glue and paintbrush
- sandpaper—medium and fine

Directions:

1. Measure the width of the board. Then divide it into sections of the same length to make square pieces. Mark them with a pencil. (Try to avoid having knots in the corners of the pieces.)
2. Cut the board using a power saw (or have it cut to size where you bought it).
3. Cut the corner off of a piece of paper. Fold the triangle in half and mark the center 1 inch in from the corner. Punch a hole. This is your hole guide.

Press Directions, page 2

Punch a hole in the hole guide. Lay it squarely against the corner of the top board.

Mark the hole clearly. Darken the center so you can see it. Do this on all four corners.

Align the two boards and clamp them together with C clamps. Drill the holes through both pieces of wood at the same time. This is the best way to make sure the holes are perfectly aligned.

Check the holes by inserting a bolt through each one.

Sand the outside face of each board using medium to fine grit.

Sand all the edges of both boards so they are rounded and smooth.

11. Cut 4–5 pieces of cardboard (tag, or railroad board) using a box cutter and a yardstick. Each piece should be 1/2 inch smaller than the outside dimensions of the boards. Cut off the corners of each of the cardboard pieces so they fit between the bolts.

Press Directions, page 3

Place all the pieces together to check the fit. Make any adjustments needed.

Size the Plant Press Image (next page) to fit our plant press and run it off on onto cover stock, tag, or heavy white drawing paper. Trim the edges carefully.

Remove the top cover of the press. Quickly cover the entire surface with school glue, using a paint brush. Brush with the wood grain. Don't let the glue drip down the sides or into the corner holes.

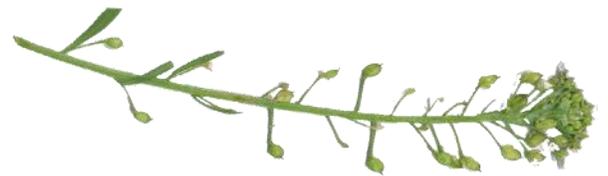
Center the image on top of the glue. If any of the corners cover the holes, trim them off. Then cover the entire image with a thick coat of glue. Put a second coat of glue along the edges. Make sure the image is pressed tightly to the board.

Set it aside to dry for 2–3 days.

Reassemble your plant press and you're ready to use it!

18. Place sheets of paper between the plants and the cardboard pieces to absorb any leaking fluid. Put as many plants as each layer as you can. Start from the bottom so you won't disturb those plants as they dry if you add more items later. Let the plants sit in the press for 2–3 weeks.

Complete Illustrated Directions to make a plant press from pine shelving.



Resizable
Cover
Image

A Rainforest Rendezvous: Plant Press



A plant press is a handy classroom tool for many themes. Children can press leaves and flowers in books (using newspaper or paper towels to protect the pages of the books), but having a classroom tool for the purpose is a much better solution. You'll find yourself using it throughout your teaching career. In fact, you may want to have more than one once you see how active the children keep it! I wished I had enough for each science group to have their own.

A plant press is very easy to make; you can complete one in a couple of hours (less if you leave the sanding to the students), but given our super busy lives, you may want to ask volunteers to help you with it. There are several ways you can use the following directions.

- Follow them to make the press yourself.
- Ask a relative or friend to make one for you.
- Have a classroom volunteer work with the children in your class and let them make it.
- Advertise for a volunteer to make one at home for you.

Whatever you decide, you'll be glad you took the time to make this versatile little item.

Some themes for plant press use:

- Native Americans
- Colonial Living
- Pioneers
- Westward Movement
- Gold Rush
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Flowers
- Plants
- Leaves
- Trees
- Rainforest
- Desert
- Woodlands
- Savannah
- Prairies
- Bugs—you can make great artifacts after pressing dead insects (Don't let kids kill them just to press them, though!)
- Art Activities
- Gift Cards

If you decide to make the press yourself, here are a couple of tips to make it easier:

- Have them cut the boards to size at the home improvement center. They usually do it for free. You'll just need to tell them the lengths to cut. (Make square pieces.)
- Bring the cut and drilled pieces to school and let the students sand them by hand. You'll be amazed at how smooth the sides and rounded the edges get. Those ADHD kiddos really know how to work!
- Let your students decoupage the cover and cut the cardboard (with a parent volunteer, of course!)

If you do these two things, all you have to do is get the materials and drill the 4 holes.

I hope you'll enjoy your new classroom tool!