

Drying Flowers Guide

Lancaster County

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Flowers blooming in your garden may be dried for use in arrangements this fall and winter. Drying methods are very easy and the results will surprise you if you have not tried your skill at preserving flowers before. For your efforts you can have an excellent collection of materials for making arrangements, wreaths, and decorating your home long after the flowers in the garden are done blooming.

Air Dry Method

The easiest method is to air dry plants by hanging bunches upside down in a dark, dry, well ventilated area, such as a closet or attic. Select flowers that are near their peak of maturity. Remove unnecessary foliage and gather the flowers with the stems still attached into small bunches. Wrap a rubber band around the end of the stems and with the last loop, attach the stems to a hanger. The drying process is complete in three to five weeks. It may be worth noting that with strawflowers you can collect only the flowers themselves and dry them without their stems on a screen or in an open box. See the following list of plants suitable for hang drying.

ANNUALS

amaranth "*Amaranthus spp.*"
winged everlasting "*Ammobium alatum grandiflorum*"
quaking grass "*Briza maxima*"
celosia "*Celosia cristata or plumosa*"
bachelor's button "*Centaurea cyanus*"
larkspur "*Consolida ambigua*"
pincushion plant "*Cotula barbata*"
globe amaranth "*Gomphrena globosa*"
strawflower "*Helichrysum bracteatum*"
helipterum "*Helipterum humboldtianum*"
rhodanthe "*Helipterum manglesii*"
acroclenium "*Helipterum roseum*"
statice "*Limonium sinuatum*"
bells of Ireland "*Moluccella laevis*"
Russian statice "*Psylliostachys suworowii*"
blue salvia "*Salvia farinacea*"
immortelle "*Xeranthemum annuum*"

PERENNIALS

yarrow "*Achillea spp.*"
ornamental onion "*Allium spp.*"
pearly everlasting "*Anaphalis margaritacea*"
artemisia "*Artemisia spp.*"
astilbe "*Astilbe x arendsii*"
heather "*Calluna vulgaris*"
chrysanthemum "*Chrysanthemum spp.*"
pampas grass "*Cortaderia selloana*"
delphinium "*Delphinium x cultorum*"
sea holly "*Erynigium planum*"
German statice "*Goniolimon talaricum*"
baby's breath "*Gypsophila paniculata*"
coral bells "*Huchera sanguinea*"
hydrangea "*Hydrangea spp.*"
lavender "*Lavandula angustifolia*"
liatris "*Liatris pycnostachya*"
sea lavender "*Limonium latifolium*"
bee balm "*Monarda spp.*"
oregano "*Origanum vulgare*"
Chinese lantern "*Physalis alkekengi*"
rose "*Rosa spp.*"
tansy "*Tanacetum vulgare*"
veronica "*Veronica spicata*"

BIENNIAL

money plant "*Lunaria annua*"

WILDFLOWERS

milkweed "*Asclepias syriaca*"
shepherd's purse "*Capsella bursa-pastoris*"
thistle "*Carduus spp.*"
Queen Anne's lace "*Daucus carota*"
teasel "*Dipsacus fullonum*"
dock "*Rumex acetosa*"
goldenrod "*Solidago spp.*"
Indian grass "*Sorghastrum nutans*"
cattails "*Typha spp.*"

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Drying Using a Granular Desiccant

Borax, corn meal, kitty litter and sand are among the common household items which can be used to dry flowers. An effective, homemade, drying compound can be made from one part borax and three part white cornmeal. Of all the granular desiccants, silica gel is the best to use. It is available at most local craft stores. Silica gel can be used many times, but when the blue indicator crystals turn pink, it has absorbed all the moisture it can. Recharge the gel by heating it in an oven at 225 degrees for several hours to restore the blue color.

Flowers to be dried should be picked just before they are at peak maturity and the petals are free of moisture. Select flowers that are free of injury or bruises because these conditions will become more evident after the drying process. Natural stems may not give the flower enough support when dry and may be difficult to manipulate and position. Cut off most of the stem, leaving only about an inch. Stems can be replaced with florist's wire after drying. Start the drying process by placing about two inches of silica gel in the bottom of a shallow container that has a tight fitting lid, such as a tin or plastic bowl. Carefully place the flowers face up on top of the silica. Slowly add more silica until the flowers are completely covered. Replace the tight fitting lid to the container. Generally, one to three weeks are required to dry flowers in a desiccant. When fully dry, the plant material will be very brittle. Carefully remove the flowers from the container. Flowers recommended for drying using a granular desiccant are included in the following list.

ANNUAL

calendula "*Calendula officinalis*"
marigold "*Tagetes erecta*"
aster "*Callistephus chinensis*"
cosmos "*Cosmos bipinnatus*"
dahlia "*Dahlia spp.*"
fuchsia "*Fuchsia hybrida*"
zinnia "*Zinnia elegans*"
pansy "*Viola x wittrockiana*"

PERENNIAL

painted daisy "*Chrysanthemum coccineum*"
chrysanthemum "*Chrysanthemum spp.*"
coreopsis "*Coreopsis verticillata*"
dianthus "*Dianthus spp.*"
rose "*Rosa spp.*"

WILDFLOWERS

blanket flower "*Gaillardia x grandiflora*"
maximillian sunflower "*Helianthus maximilliana*"
blackeyed Susan "*Rudbeckia hirta*"