

# Pressed Plants

## *Naturally*

Bernd Hildebrandt

Hi-Creative

First published in the UK in 2019 by  
Hi-Creative Design, Reading, Berkshire, UK

[www.hi-creative.co.uk](http://www.hi-creative.co.uk)

Copyright © Hi-Creative 2019  
Hi-Creative being the collective artistic work of:  
Martina, Markus and Bernd Hildebrandt

The right of Bernd Hildebrandt to be identified as author of this work  
has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs  
and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored  
in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form  
or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording  
or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the copyright  
owner and the publisher of this book.

ISBN (English Edition): 978-1-9162464-0-9

ISBN (German Edition): 978-1-9162464-1-6

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Pressed plant designs, diagrams and text: Bernd Hildebrandt  
Copy-editing: Markus and Martina Hildebrandt  
Photos, scans, image editing and design: Markus Hildebrandt

[landscape FSC logo]

Printed by Swallowtail Print, Drayton Industrial Park, Norwich, UK  
[www.swallowtailprint.co.uk](http://www.swallowtailprint.co.uk)

## Contents

Introduction	7	Winter and Spring Flowers	38
Tools and Accessories	9	Summer and Autumn Flowers	49
Using the Flower Press	11	Foliage	60
What to Press?	13	Unusual Experiments	66
Nectar, Pollen and Sap	16	Conservation of Wild Plants	68
Stem Reduction	18	Taking Pressed Designs Further	69
When to Collect Plant Material	20	Personal Stationery	70
Questions Answered	20	Many Colours ...	71
Presenting Pressed Plants	21	Creating Non-floral Pictures	72
Overlapping Stems and Leaves	23	Gallery	82
Note of Caution	24	Glossary	88
Wild Flowers	25	Bibliography	90
Grassy Areas	36	Index	92

The images printed in this book are mostly smaller than the original plants; those that are actual size are indicated (1:1)

## **Dedication**

**To the memory of my wife Ilse,  
who introduced me to the pressed flower craft  
over fifty years ago.**

## **Acknowledgements**

My grateful thanks go foremost to my immediate family. Literally from cover to cover this publication was only made possible by my son Markus, through his commitment to this project and his skilled work in presentation. In recent years he created an archive of over twelve-hundred scans of my pressed plant designs, the original pictures being sold at charity events as greeting cards. In all this we had the invaluable practical support of my daughter Martina, an artist in her own right, who also engaged herself effectively over many years in the charitable application of all my work with pressed plants.

I thank my neighbour Charles Langham, for his interest and a generous supply of material from his garden and allotment.

My thanks go to the many people all over the world, known and unknown, who expressed their admiration for this work and gave me encouragement. This can be summed up in one quote: "You have given pleasure to hundreds of people – don't forget that!"

## Introduction

This book offers an alternative presentation of pressed plant materials to those found in other craft books and magazine articles on the subject. It describes and illustrates a different approach to processing materials that nature provides, for surprising and pleasing end results.

Throughout the history of art and craft, plants have their firm place: they can be observed in Roman mosaics, in the earliest illuminated manuscripts, in stained glass, ancient stonework, medieval woodcarving, and paintings of all ages. Everywhere, even in the most stylised forms, plants are depicted as a whole, as objects of beauty in their own right. All parts of a plant – stems, leaves, buds, flowers, fruits or seedheads, even roots – inspire the artist and artisan. But rarely would you find a flower from one plant and leaves from another put together and presented as a new composition. A curious practice of mixing came about only in relatively recent times, creating an entirely new genre in the application of plant material in art and craft. What we have is a creative Victorian pastime that has undergone very little change.

To this day, the usage of pressed flowers and other parts of plants in the design of pictures, without any regard to botanical accuracy, represents this once very popular activity. In craft books the reader is guided towards designs that often result in elaborate, attractive, but completely unnatural presentations. And because instructions are often given to press only blooms from certain plants, stalks from others and leaves from again an entirely different source, the unique character of a plant is not taken into account. For instance, I remember a charming picture of pressed pansies, but the two maple leaves, which formed the base of the design, illustrated perfectly the common practice. Why not use the plant's own, very attractive leaves? Maybe because they were not on the list of suitable material.



Cow Parsley  
*Anthriscus sylvestris*  
'Ravenswing'



Nectar  
discolouration



Greater Periwinkle  
*Vinca major*



Verbena (annual)  
*Verbena × hybrida* (1:1)

**Maple** The leaves in combination with clusters of small flowers or young winged fruit merit a display on their own. Pressed leaves, especially of the young Norway maple, appear nearly transparent; they can often be so thin that they need careful handling. The Japanese maple varieties provide leaves from spring to autumn in green, yellow, orange, and from bright red to burgundy. Often the foliage of basal shoots on grafted ornamental shrubs and trees is different from the main plant, but worth considering on their own or for a composition of mixed leaves.



Field Maple *Acer campestre*  
(leaves and winged fruit)



Norway Maple  
*Acer platanoides*



Japanese Maple *Acer palmatum*  
(leaves and winged fruit)



Japanese Maple *Acer palmatum*  
(flowering)



Basal shoots from an *Acer palmatum* cultivar



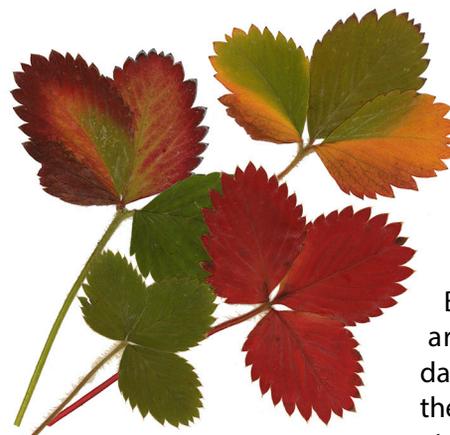
*Robinia pseudoacacia*

**Flowering ornamental shrubs and trees** These should not be overlooked for their potential. I have already mentioned the difficulties with flowers from the pea family in general (p31), and these extend to large shrubs and trees. Unsurprisingly, attempts to press foliage and flowers of *Wisteria* have defeated me. The ornamental tree *Robinia*, however, can provide quite interesting foliage and the clusters of white flowers, which turn a cream colour in the press, present a good and lasting feature.

**Smoke Tree** In addition to the autumn colour-retaining maple leaves, the smoke tree leaves provide an array of colours.



Smoke Tree  
*Cotinus coggygria*



Garden Strawberry  
*Fragaria x ananassa*

**The garden strawberry**

An interesting range of summer and autumn colours can be found not only on shrubs and trees, but also on plants closer to the ground.

Because strawberry leaves are much more prone to damage, you have to inspect them regularly and pick them at the right moment for use in the flower press.

## Creating Non-floral Pictures

Over time, the accumulation of surplus pressed material led to the idea to use it for non-floral art. I found that its qualities make it an excellent medium for creating a picture. Bits of plants can do much that would be more difficult to achieve otherwise.

**Depicting Birds** Sketch your chosen bird either free-hand or trace the outlines from a picture and start pasting. Here, too, I recommend the use of liquid paper glue (see p10). The shaping of material is done with a craft knife. An important aspect is the right sequence of overlapping parts. Observe the placement of a bird's feathers. Start at the tail and work towards the body and head. Usually, the head is best shaped from the back and neck towards the beak.

I found white shades in plant materials to be in short supply. Therefore, it takes a little effort to find and successfully press white flower petals that actually stay white, such as those of white-flowering larkspur. And, for example, the yellow petals of the lesser celandine that turn white (see p45) are most useful, as are the petals of pale blue or white love-in-a-mist (*Nigella damascena*). They have a feathery appearance and after pressing turn white/grey within a few months.

For a picture of this kind, the whole setting has to be thought of as well. You may need to choose and press foliage, twigs, bark, etc. for this specific purpose.



Wilted and discoloured tulip leaves make very good substitutes for wood (1:1)



Nuthatch in Ivy (complemented by a thin piece of bark)

# Index

\* Plants not illustrated

## A

*Acer campestre* 61  
    *palmatum* 60, 61, 85  
    *platanoides* 61  
*Adiantum raddianum* 84  
*Aesculus hippocastanum* 19  
*Agrostemma githago*\* 29  
*Agrostis canina* 37  
    *capillaris* 37  
*Alstroemeria* 13, 14, 71  
Alum Root 86  
*Anemone* 38  
    *blanda* 38  
    'de Caen' 38, 71  
    *hupehensis* 38, 54, 56  
    'Hadspen Abundance' 56  
*Anemone*, Balkan 38  
    Japanese 56  
Anther 39, 50  
*Anthoxanthum odoratum* 37  
*Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing' 7,  
    37, 40  
*Aquilegia* 48, 71  
Ash, Common 15, 78  
*Astrantia* 34  
*Auricula*\* 42

## B

Bachelor's Buttons 35  
Bark 18, 64, 72, 74  
Basal 34, 38, 39, 42, 43, 46, 48, 61, 68

Bedstraw, 31  
    Lady's 37  
Bellflower\* 14  
*Bellis perennis* 'Flore Pleno' 82  
Bent, Common 37  
    Velvet 37  
Birch 73  
Bittercress, Hairy 20, 47, 69, 87  
Blade (of grass) 23, 36, 40  
Bloom 7, 11, 13, 14, 25, 35, 40, 57  
Bluebell, English\* 41  
    Spanish 41  
*Brachythecium rutabulum* 37  
Bract 26, 28, 34, 50, 66, 67  
*Briza maxima* 37  
Broom 66, 86  
Bud 7, 12, 26–28, 34, 35, 42, 46, 49,  
    59, 67  
Buttercup, Meadow 24, 33, 54

## C

*Calendula officinalis* 56  
Calyx 16, 26, 42  
*Campanula*\* 14  
Campion, Red 25  
*Capsella bursa-pastoris* 47  
*Cardamine hirsuta* 47, 69, 87  
Carrot, 34, 40  
    Wild 11, 12, 33, 34, 68  
*Catananche caerulea* 82  
Celandine, Lesser 45, 54, 72  
*Centaurea cyanus*\* 28  
    *montana* 28  
Cherry\* 71  
Chlorophyll 60  
*Chrysanthemum* 'Anastasia Green' 66

Cinquefoil, Creeping 10  
Cleavers 37, 39, 40  
*Clematis* 15, 71  
Clover, 25, 32, 36, 76  
    White 32, 83  
    'Purpurascens Quadrifolium' 32  
Composite 26, 28, 29  
*Consolida ajacis* 57, 83  
Corncockle\* 29  
Cornflower, 28, 33, 66, 68  
    Perennial 28  
Corolla tube 16, 42  
Corona 16, 40, 50  
*Cosmos bipinnatus* 83  
*Cotinus coggygria* 62  
Cowslip 42  
Cranesbill, 63, 82  
    Bloody 63  
    Hedgerow 27, 33, 37, 87  
    Meadow 63  
Crocus, 20, 39  
    Snow 39, 71, 85  
    Spring\* 39  
*Crocus chrysanthus* 39, 85  
    *vernus*\* 39  
Cupid's Dart 82  
*Cyclamen* 59

## D

Daffodil 8, 16, 18, 24, 40, 41, 71, 87  
    'Rip van Winkle' 87  
Daisy, 20, 25  
    Crown 29  
    'Flore Pleno' 82  
Dandelion 18, 20, 26, 27, 47, 68  
*Daucus carota* 11, 12