

Illinois
Extension



Illinois 4-H

Floriculture Resources

Flower Preservation Preview





WELCOME

The study and practice of Floriculture is a great way to learn plant science, develop creativity, and cultivate a lifelong appreciation for flowers, gardening, and outdoor spaces. A successful floriculture enthusiast needs to understand plant biology and care, master design principles, be detail-oriented with growing techniques, and know how to create beautiful arrangements, displays, and outdoor environments.

The 4-H Floriculture project area can help you identify resources to help you learn to be a skilled, creative, and successful flower grower, designer, and landscape planner through exciting hands-on practice. Explore the resources available, from books to videos, to in-person workshops and online tutorials, and choose the ones that are right for you!

Want help planning your learning journey? Use the Project Plans available for different ages on the Illinois 4-H website at go.illinois.edu/memberresources.

We encourage you to identify an adult in your life who can help guide you in your learning as you prepare for the 4-H Fair season!



The focus of this guide is **Floriculture: Flower Preservation**. Flower preservation is the art and science of extending the beauty of flowers beyond their natural bloom time. In this project area, 4-H youth can learn how to dry, press, or otherwise preserve flowers and plant materials while maintaining their color, shape, and structure. Through hands-on practice, 4-H members can discover how timing, moisture, airflow, and handling techniques affect preservation success. Flower preservation encourages careful observation, patience, and attention to detail—skills that are essential in both horticulture and creative design.

Preserved flowers are used in artwork, home décor, jewelry, greeting cards, floral arrangements, and special event keepsakes, such as wedding bouquets and memorial displays. If you are interested in art, science, business, or horticulture, flower preservation can provide a unique way to combine creativity with plant knowledge while exploring how natural materials can be used in meaningful and lasting ways.

As part of your learning journey, you're invited to share something you learned at your local 4-H show or fair through exhibits, demonstrations, or competitions. Make sure to reference the State Fair Guidelines and Score Sheets for your project area and pull together resources to guide your learning.

You can help develop this resource for the 4-H Floriculture project area! Please share your favorite resources, project ideas, and hands-on activities with the State 4-H Office using this form: go.illinois.edu/4HFloricultureProject. Upon review, the State 4-H Office will publish your ideas so other 4-H youth and families can be inspired to do more in Floriculture.

Good luck and happy growing!

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FLOWER PRESERVATION STATE FAIR GUIDELINES

Each county may submit 1 entry from classes 50122-50123.

Dry/Preserve Flowers – Poster (SF 50122)

Create a display focusing on an aspect of drying/preserving flowers. Topics may include, but are not limited to, different drying/preserving methods, tools used in preservation, experiments you completed & results.

Dried Flowers/Herbs – Artistic Display (SF 50123)

Create an artistic display using dried flowers or herbs. The dried material used must have been dried by the exhibitor. Be prepared to discuss the drying process behind your piece.

FLOWER PRESERVATION STATE FAIR SCORESHEETS

As you prepare for Fair season, be sure to reference the most recent scoresheets for Flower Preservation on the Illinois 4-H website under the Illinois 4-H State Fair event page:

4h.extension.illinois.edu/events/state-events/illinois-state-fair





GUIDING YOUR LEARNING

The purpose of the new classes and learning opportunities in the Floriculture project area is to create opportunities for 4-H members to expand the project resources that they can utilize to guide their learning. The traditional Floriculture project booklets (available through Shop4-H.org) will continue to be acceptable.

As part of this process, 4-H members will be encouraged to find new project resources, hands-on activities, and learning opportunities. Below, we provide some guidance on finding trusted, evidence-based, and educational resources. Helping youth learn how to judge information quality is just as important as the information itself.

As you start out looking for resources, here are some helpful things that can help youth determine the quality of an information source:

Credible - Resources that are known to be research-based.

- University / Land Grant programs (often ending in .edu)
- Botanical gardens and professional horticulture organizations
- Established publishers of gardening and horticulture books
- 4-H, FFA, or Master Gardener materials

Accurate - Consistent across multiple, reputable sources.

- Compare 2-3 different sources
- Look for agreement on:
 - Preservation methods
 - Preserving/drying conditions
 - Required tools or equipment
 - Plant care recommendations

Current - Plant science information changes as best practices evolve.

- Check the publication or update date
- Focus on resources from the last 10-15 years

Clear - Resources that explain why something works.

- Step-by-step explanations
- Photos or diagrams
- References to research, trials, or Extension guidance
- Clear cause-and-effect explanations

Educational - Resources that are about teaching and not about selling.

- Encourages learning and experimentation
- Explains options, not just one 'perfect' method
- Educational in tone, not pushing a product





SHOWING YOUR LEARNING

The 4-H program is about learning by doing, and 4-H participants are encouraged to demonstrate their learning in this project by preparing a photo collage, preparing cut flowers, a display, a presentation, or a video to exhibit at their local county 4-H project show. Consult your county's show book for exhibit rules and guidelines. You can choose to make your project about anything you learned while doing this project! You may find exhibit ideas in the project resources that you use to guide your learning.

Whether you use the resources recommended in the Project Resource Guide or those of your own choosing, it will be important to be able to explain your choice. As you prepare for your exhibit, you can ask yourself:

- Why did you trust this resource?
- How did this resource help you?
- Would you use this resource again? Why or why not?

Some other ideas for ways that 4-H members can demonstrate their learning in Flower Preservation:

Dry/Preserve Flowers – Poster (SF 50122)

- Comparing flower drying methods with photos, timelines, and results.
- Experimenting with which drying methods preserve color best on the same flower type.
- Chart demonstrating which flowers preserved the best and why.
- Display tools used in the flower preservation and explain their use.
- Visual walkthrough of one flower drying method from harvest to finished product.
- Environmental factors that affect drying and how they affect results.
- Comparing different preservation techniques, their uses, and the outcomes observed.
- Common problems in flower preservation and how to avoid them.

Dried Flowers/Herbs – Artistic Display (SF 50123)

- Arranging dried or pressed flowers in a wall hanging.
- Arranging pressed flowers into a creative design or theme.
- Arranging dried herbs in a wreath or garland.
- Arranging dried flowers in a shadow box memory display based on a theme.
- Creating a floral mosaic or patterned design using repeated shapes and colors for visual impact.
- Demonstrating balance, scale, and preservation technique with a dried flower table arrangement.
- Incorporating pressed flowers into functional art, like bookmarks or paper art.
- Show how preservation affects flower color.





FEEDBACK FORM

Please take a moment to share your best resources, activities, and project ideas with the rest of the Illinois 4-H program! Your feedback will help us develop a more extensive project resource guide for the 4-H Floriculture project area: go.illinois.edu/4HFloricultureProject

CREDITS

Mark Becker, 4-H Food Systems Specialist, and Kathy Book, 4-H Educator, compiled this resource. It was originally published in February 2026.

PHOTO CREDITS

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Page 2: preserved flower arrangement by fy2907fw

Page 6: Dried Flowers in Wooden Bowl by Alfredo Marco Pradil

Page 7: Colorful Spice Market Display with Herbs and Flowers by Magda Ehlers





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