

Seaweed Press

Bring the beauty of the ocean home by creating your own pressed seaweed artwork!

Seaweed pressing is a centuries-old practice that combines science, art, and a love of the marine environment.

With just a few simple materials, you can preserve seaweeds and create stunning natural displays.



Materials Needed

- Fresh seaweed specimens
- Shallow tray, dishpan, or baking sheet
- Water
- White cardstock, watercolor paper, or heavy paper
- Paper towels or blotting paper
- Newspaper
- Cardboard
- Heavy books or a flower press
- Parchment paper (optional)
- Binder clips (optional)
- Tweezers or paintbrushes (optional)

Step 1: Collect Your Seaweed

Gather seaweeds from the shoreline or tide pools. Look for specimens that are intact and free from excessive sand or debris. Be sure to follow local regulations and only collect where permitted.

Step 2: Arrange Your Specimen

Fill a shallow tray with a thin layer of water. The freshwater will rinse away salt, sand, and other debris. Place your sheet of cardstock or watercolor paper underwater in the tray.

Carefully float the seaweed onto the water above the paper. Use your fingers, tweezers, or a small paintbrush to spread branches, blades, and delicate filaments into an arrangement. A paintbrush can be especially helpful for positioning fine, filamentous algae without damaging them.

Once you're happy with the arrangement, slowly lift the paper straight up from underneath the seaweed. As the water drains away, the seaweed will settle onto the paper in its arranged position.

If preferred, you can also arrange the seaweed directly onto the paper outside of the water tray. While the water method often helps seaweeds spread naturally, some thicker species can be positioned successfully by hand.

Step 3: Blot Excess Water

Place a sheet of paper towel or blotting paper over the seaweed and gently press to absorb excess moisture. Avoid rubbing, which can disturb the arrangement.

A sheet of parchment paper can be placed over the seaweed before adding blotting paper. This helps prevent the specimen from sticking to the blotter or transferring to the wrong surface during drying.

Step 4: Press and Dry

Layer your seaweed press as follows:

1. Cardboard
2. Newspaper, a few layers (2-4 pieces)
3. Seaweed specimen on watercolor or blotting paper
4. Parchment paper (optional)
5. Second sheet of watercolor or blotting paper
6. Newspaper, a few layers (2-4 pieces)
7. Cardboard

Clip together with binder clips, and place the stack under heavy books or in a flower press.

Allow the specimen to dry for 1–2 weeks. Replace damp newspaper and blotting paper every few days during the first week. This helps prevent mold growth, improves airflow, and speeds the drying process.

Step 5: Display Your Artwork

Once fully dry, your seaweed press is ready to display! Frame it, use it in a scrapbook, create greeting cards, or add it to a nature journal.

Tips for Success

- Thin, branching species tend to press better than thick or leathery seaweeds.
- A small paintbrush is an excellent tool for arranging fine filaments and intricate branching patterns.
- If your specimen sticks to the blotting paper, try using parchment paper during future presses.
- Label your artwork with the species name, collection date, and location.
- Experiment with different species and arrangements to create unique designs.

Seaweed pressing is a wonderful way to appreciate marine biodiversity while creating beautiful works of natural art. Every specimen tells a story about the ocean and the incredible diversity of life beneath the waves.