

C.R.PITT DESIGNS

Pressing Flowers



Hazlehurst Studios & Halton libraries

☺ Nice to meet you!

I'M CLAIRE.

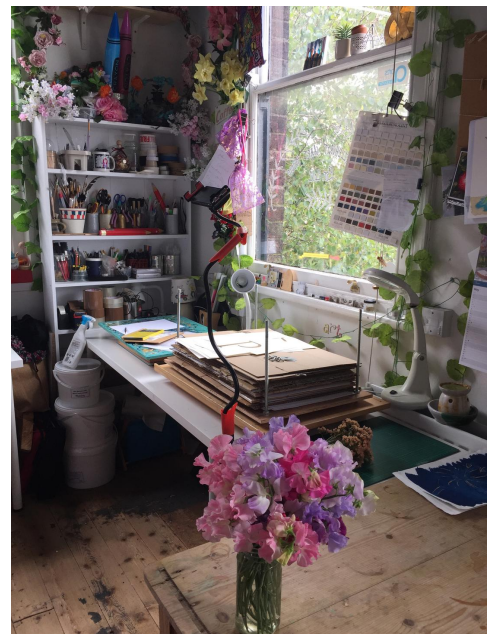
I am an artist based at Hazlehurst Studios, which is on Runcorn High Street.

I primarily work with pressed flowers, that I have grown, collected from my community garden project or from bespoke wedding commissions. I use the pressed florals to create art in different ways, from prints to gilded letter work.

The tutorial should help you start your own floral dance journey, preserving floral memories from your own gardens and adventures.

This is the PDF version to accompany the version on the libraries Youtube channel, which has some short timelapses to guide you on your way.

Halton Libraries have been striving to find new ways to interact with the local community and this is just one of the ways we are working towards this.



What do you need?

- Flower press: I prefer my handmade wooden ones, over the bought mdf ones, but those still work. I haven't personally layered up in books, but as long as you don't press anything too thick, I would give it a whirl.
- Cardboard: Essential for creating protection in between the layers of flowers, especially from mould, if one layer doesn't press well. It also helps create an even press. I cut my cardboard to size from old boxes and packaging.
- Paper: You can either get blotting paper (if you buy a flower pressing kit, it will usually come with paper and cardboard). I vary between using blotting paper myself and heavy cartridge paper, as I buy large sheets and cut them down to size. Try to avoid using kitchen towel paper, it is very absorbent, but flowers are more likely to stick to it and be ruined.
- Tweezers: Essential for moving flowers around and for coaxing off the paper when the flowers are pressed.
- Scissors (or secateurs): For collecting your florals and for prepping them for the press.
- Flowers: Grow your own, Forage for them or buy them.

What do you need?



Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel

Step One - Prepare your paper and flower press



Having your cardboard layers and paper ready, is essential when preparing to press flowers. It means that you are ready to press, when the weather is good and/or you have flowers to hand.

Our British weather is so precarious, so although it feels like days of endless sun at the moment, I have made that mistake before and picked flowers in a mad dash, without being prepared.



I would also recommend preparing extra fresh paper now, for when you check on the flowers during the pressing process, in case of mould and the need for paper changes.

Tip: Cut paper slightly smaller than your cardboard layers

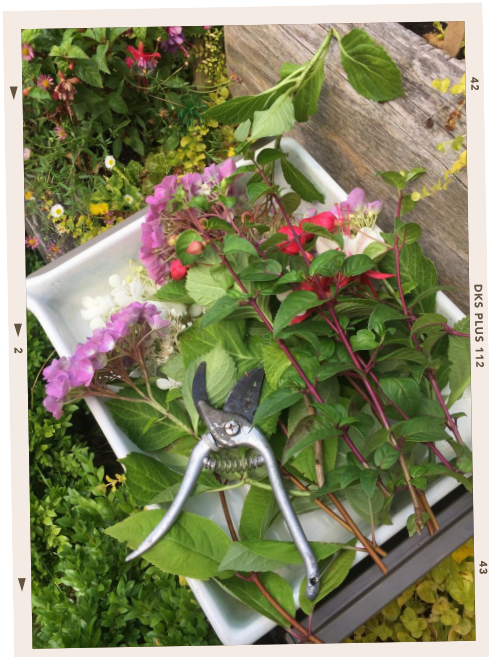
Step Two- Collecting the flowers

A dry sunny day is always going to be the best day to collect flowers, this is the time to have some fun and pick the flowers that you are drawn to.

Don't go for large headed flowers such as roses or peonies, unless you want to press individual petals.

Try and cut as much stem as possible, this will help later on when you condition the flowers, in the same way you would when dealing with a bouquet of flowers, then the flowers will be in the best condition to press. This basically means, trim off any excess stem and place in water with a bit of sugar for a few hours (or overnight).

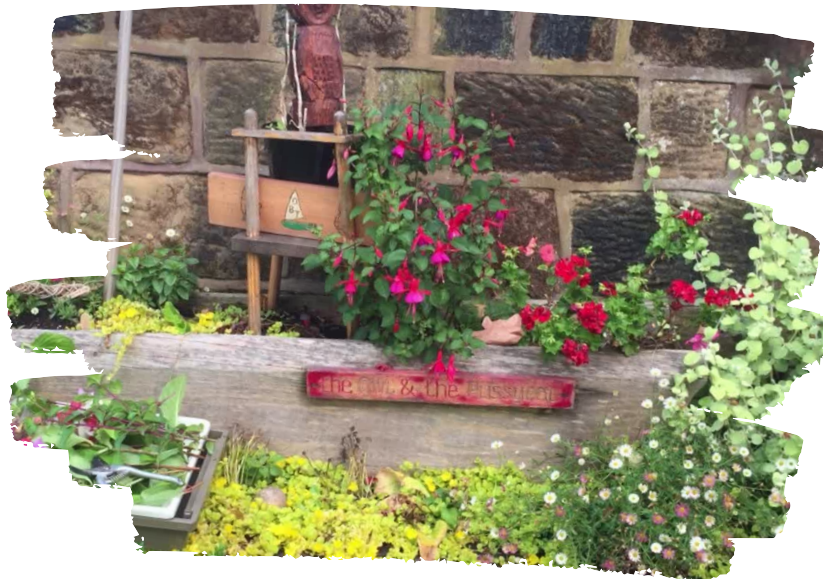
Tip: I would also heartily recommend visiting your local florist or trying one of the letterbox delivery services. This way you get to enjoy the flowers for a few days, before pressing them.



Where do I collect flowers from?



*Old Town Bloom
Community Garden*



Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel

Where do I
collect flowers
from?



*Hazlehurst Studios
Roof Terrace Garden*



Foraging



If you don't have a garden to collect flowers from, or are on your travels, then some sensible foraging is recommended.

Please check the latest guidelines on what you can and cannot pick. If you are collecting on a foraging walk be mindful that those flowers will need to either be pressed pretty handy when you get home or placed in some water to revive.

Protected Plants Info:

- <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/picking-wildflowers-and-the-law>
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/section/13>
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/8>



Conditioning the flowers



*Place in vases or jars
overnight*



Step Three- Prepping the flowers



If the flowers have been in water, you must remove any part of the stem that was submerged, as you do not want any excess moisture going into the press.



If you have collected your flowers from the garden or on a foraging trip, there are going to be some creepy crawlies in the mix, from aphids to spiders.

You can try brushing them off with a soft paint brush, but some will get pressed along with the flowers. You can also spray with a gentle bug killer and leave overnight, I haven't ever bothered with this method. If you want bug free, then the florist option might be for you!

Tip: Be ruthless, keep only the best blooms and foilage

Prepping the flowers



TRIM THE STEMS

PREPPING THE FLOWERS



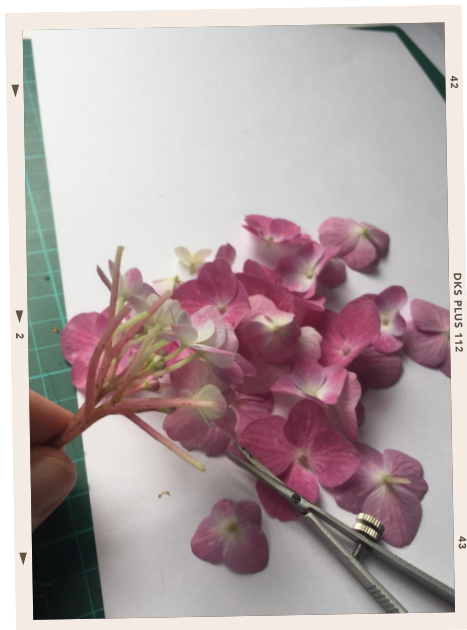
Reject Pile

Prepping the flowers



Reject Pile

Step Four- Trimming and Laying out the flowers

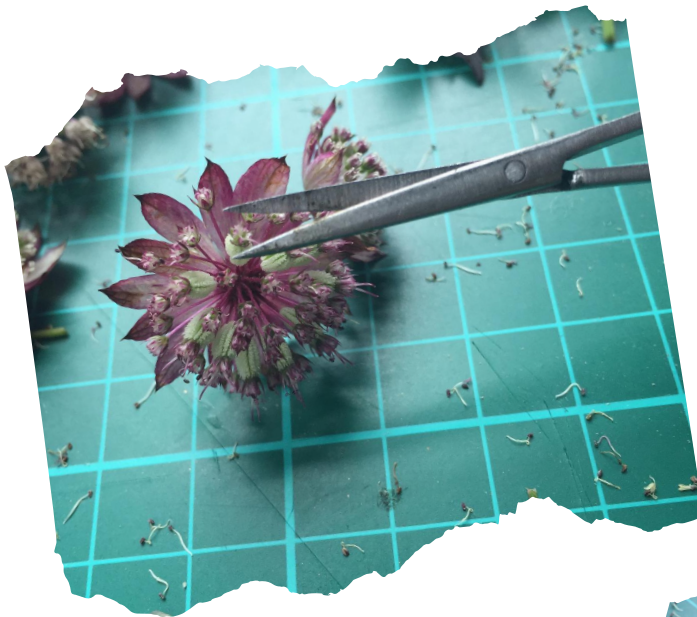


Trim everything down to the size you like, pressing just the flowers or keeping some leaves and stem. I sometimes prefer to press flowers sideways, rather than face down.

This is not just for aesthetics, I have found that they can press better this way. Although I always try and mix it up a bit and sometimes just hope for the best. Make sure you leave enough space around each flower, so that as they expand and flatten, they don't overlap.

Tip: Try and photograph your flowers at this point, you will be amazed to see how the shape and colour of the flowers changes in the pressing process.

Trimming flowers



Astrantia

TRIMMING FLOWERS VIDEO

Astrantia



Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel

Trimming flowers



Hydrangea

Laying out flowers



Astrantia



LAYING OUT FLOWERS



Hydrangea

Laying out flowers



Laying out flowers



Sweet Peas

Laying out flowers Video



Astrantia

Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel

Step Five- The Floral Sandwich



In terms of how to layer up your press, place the flowers that have the thickest stems and larger flowers on the bottom and work your way up that way. You want to stick with flowers of the same size and height on every layer, otherwise some will press better than others.



Remember the flow is~ a cardboard layer, then your paper, then add flowers, then add your second piece of paper over this and then the next cardboard layer.

Tip: Try and make a note of what is in every layer that you press and the date that you pressed it.

Floral sandwich



Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel

Step Six- Consistent Pressure



Once you are fully layered up, if you have wingnuts to tighten, then twirl them around half way on all the points, check to see if everything looks even, then tighten as far as it will go, making sure all sides are equal.



I find adding a heavy book or books in the centre of the press also help. If there are any gaps, this means that the flowers are more likely to shrivel up as the air gets to them (another reason why I prefer to sideways press, as this creates less height).

Closing the press



Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel



Step Seven- Change the paper



On a trip to the National History Museum, I had a great conversation with a collections officer, who was a botanist, a geologist, a zoologist and a few other things! He recommended changing the paper every day, but well, that's not going to happen. So I would recommend checking after a few days/maybe a week, remove anything that looks iffy (mouldy/slimy), change paper if anything is too damp and then don't peek again for four weeks.

Step Eight- Out the press



Once at least four weeks have gone by, check your flowers again and see if it's time they come out the press. The flowers should come away from the paper very easily, if not just gentle tap the paper and see if that loosens them. Some flowers that have a higher water content in them, may be slightly stuck, so you can very gently ease them off the paper with a scalpel or tweezers. If they are completely stuck to the paper, then you may just have to salvage the petals or send to the compost bin, it's meant to be fun and if there are a few floral casualties, that is absolutely fine.



Tip: Now is the time to make notes about what has worked and what hasn't, what colour changes have happened.

Out the press video



Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel

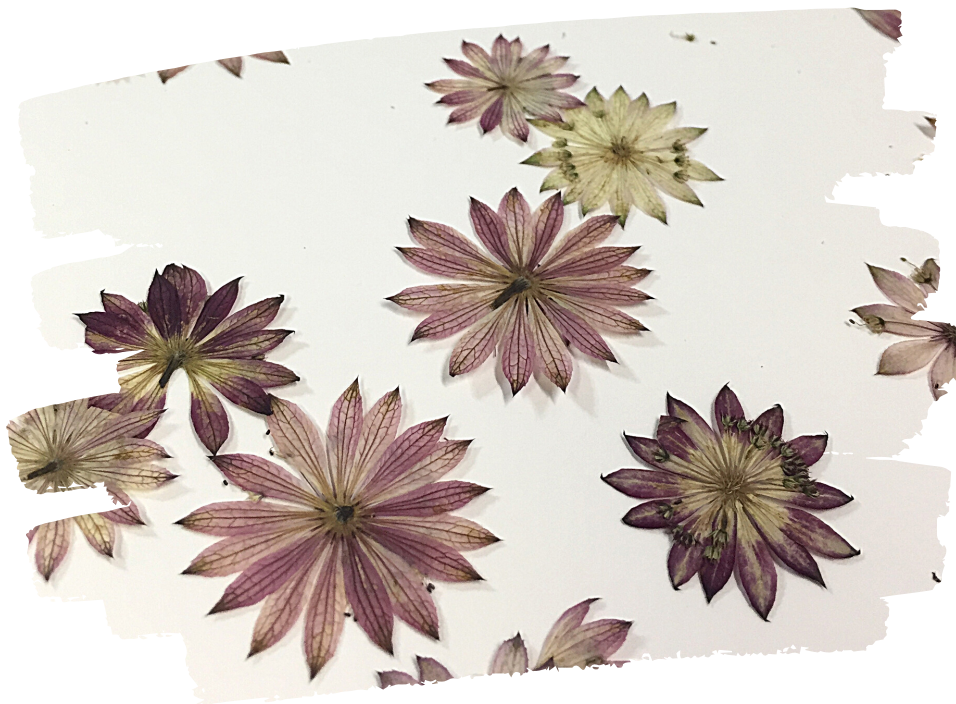
Out the press



Out the press



Out the press



Out the press



Step Nine- How to Store Press Flowers



Think about storage for the pressed flowers, the better you store them now, the longer they will last in good condition.

I would either place them back in the press on fresh paper, if not using the press immediately or place them in paper layers, in a plastic box (with a good lid) and then store in a drawer or dark cupboard.



Step Ten- Get Creative



Now that the flowers are pressed, what are you going to do with them? Although slightly fragile, if the flowers are pressed well, they can be used in many different art forms.



I create letters, words and designs, using the pressed flowers to create the structure and flow. I love the combination of gold leaf, skeleton leaves and the natural materials of flowers, so a lot of my work is a combination of both.

Cyanotypes - using pressed flowers in this process allows for a close contact, and produces great results!

Other fun ideas: Monoprinting with flowers, easy bookmarks (you can use a laminator to create these). You can also make simple handmade cards and embellish them with a few pressed flowers.

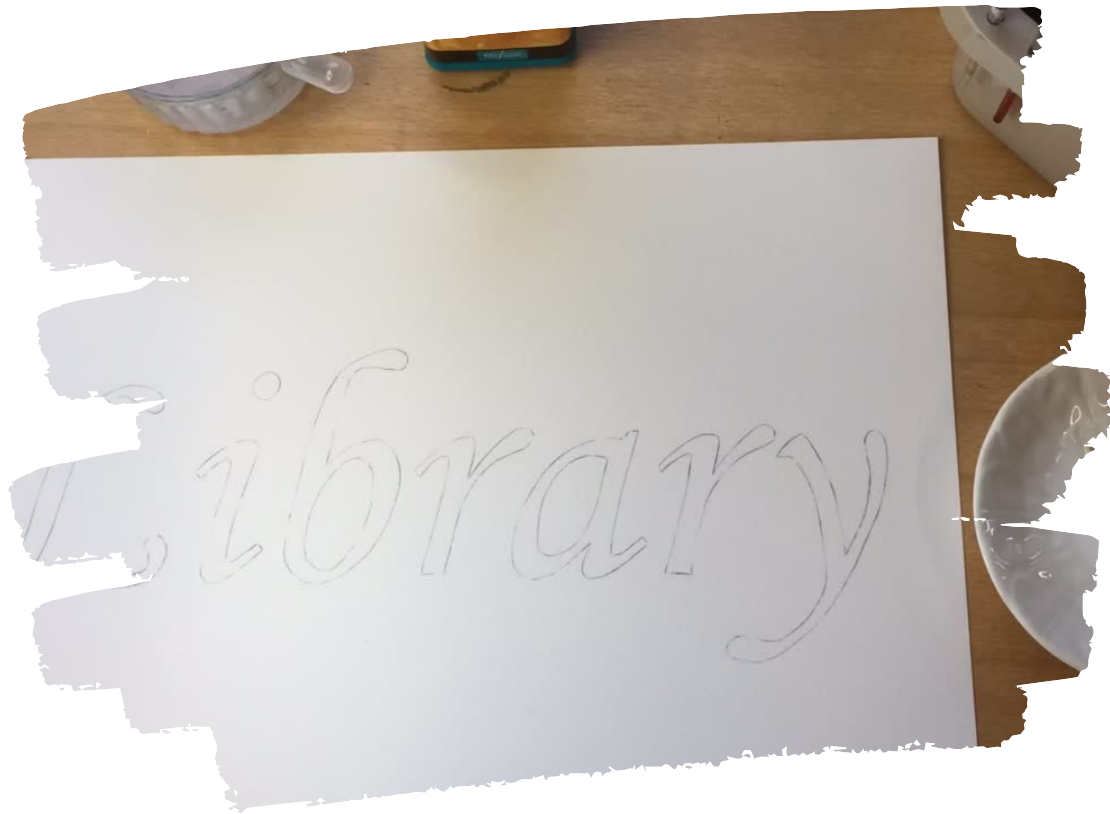
Library



Close up details



Sizing the library



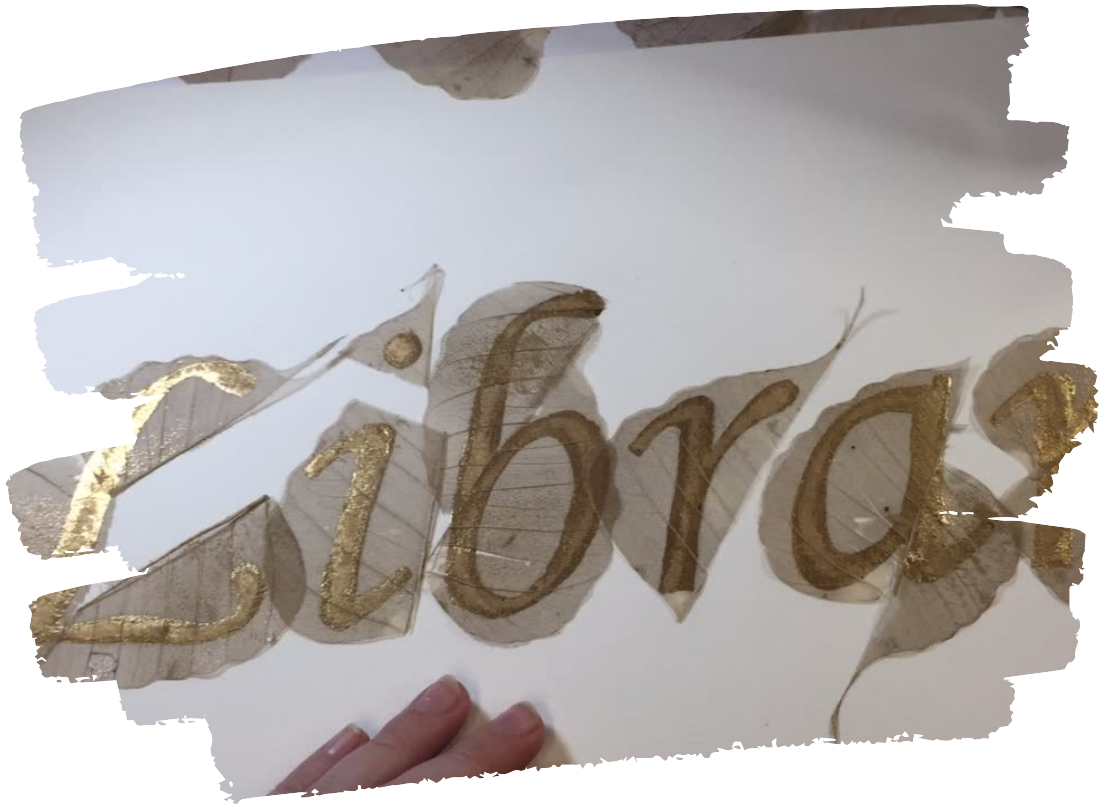
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Gilding the library



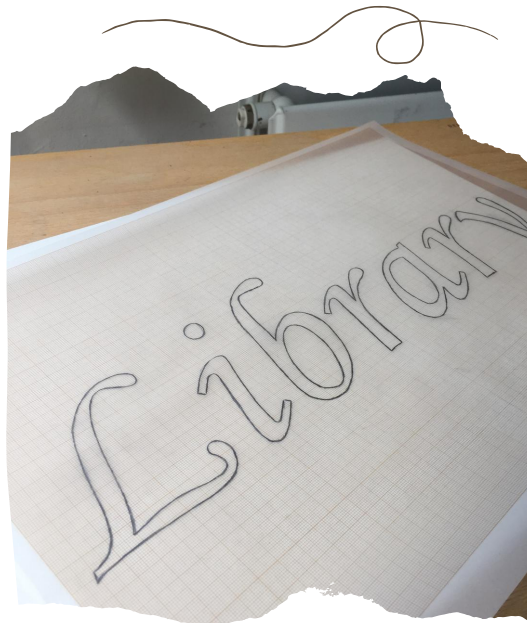
Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel

Trimming Library



Watch the video on Halton Libraries Youtube Channel

Designing Library



Designing Library



Floral Letters & Designs



Floral Letters & Designs



CYANOTYPES



CYANOTYPES



Thanks for reading!

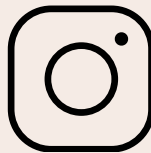
*Happy to answer any questions!
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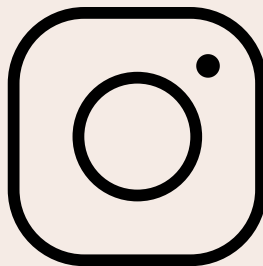
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