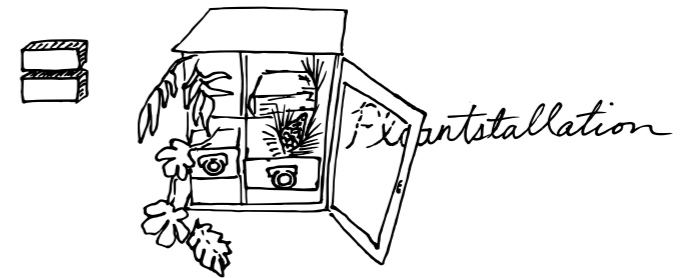


# *A Practical Guide to Making Your Planttation*



Foraged  +    
(in a material empathy context)



## DESCRIPTION

A plantstallation is small-scale mixed media art installation centred around plant species that are native to Scotland, plants that would be found in an ancient Caledonian forest. Plants should be foraged in any natural setting where they grow (a park, a forest, etc.) and used in conjunction with other materials or objects, either handmade or found, with the idea of establishing a connection between the symbolism or significance of the plants and how the objects or materials support those ideas. It can be thought of as a ritualistic act, where the meaning of the plantstallation is created through your intentions in dialogue with the symbolism of the plants, materials, and objects. The process of creating a plantstallation also incorporates the concept of material empathy, a topic explained in more detail within the Material Empathy booklet.

Making a plantstallation can build your self-confidence, establish trust in your creative abilities, and strengthen your relationship with the natural world. The action of creating this art installation is a socially engaged art practice, facilitating a method to increase one's well-being alongside other participants, while interacting with your local environment.

## HERE'S HOW TO MAKE YOUR PLANTSTALLATION

### INVITE

Invite your friends and family members to join you on your plantstallation journey and make it a socially engaged experience.



**NOTE:** The plantstallation practice can, of course, be done as a solo journey - but for the most benefit and richest experience, try to get others involved, too!

## RESEARCH

Begin by choosing a native plant (or plants) that symbolises a theme you are interested in working with for your plantstallation(s). Depending on the selection, themes could be protection, endurance, strength, communication, etc. A good place to start your research into the lore and symbolism of native Scottish plants is with the four following books:

*Scottish Plant Lore: An Illustrated Flora* by Gregory J. Kenicer

*Folk Magic and Healing: An Unusual History of Everyday Plants* by Fez Inkwright

*Flora Celtica: Plants and People in Scotland* by William Milliken

*Plants and People in Ancient Scotland* by Camilla Dickson

(see suggested plant reading list for more information)



## FORAGE

Find a natural setting to search for your chosen plant species, or get inspired by the plants that are growing abundantly in your foraging area. Bring garden shears or something to make a small cutting that will not damage the plant. Maybe you want to collect more than one type of plant, so bring a container to carry your cuttings safely back to your work area.

**NOTE:** While out foraging, bring along the provided plant field guide to assist in identifying and learning about species native to the Caledonian forest.

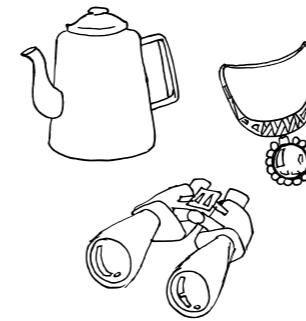
Basic principles of responsible foraging:

- Gather your cuttings carefully, avoiding damage to the plant and its roots
- Only take from plants that are growing abundantly in the area, allowing rare or unique plants to grow undisturbed
- Walk only where necessary, reducing the impact on the environment where you're foraging
- Be safe; some species of plants share many characteristics with others but could be poisonous - be sure of what you're taking! If at any time you're unsure about the plant, don't touch it
- Dress appropriately for the weather and be aware of tides when foraging near the coast



## OBJECTS/MATERIALS

Think about what sorts of objects or materials you might have on hand (this really can be anything). Perhaps, you have an object that reflects the symbolism of the plant that you selected while out foraging? Or, maybe you have a few objects or materials that create some kind of dialogue with the meaning of the plant? The idea is to add depth to your plantstallation by pairing the plant with an object or material that carries some kind of significance for you.



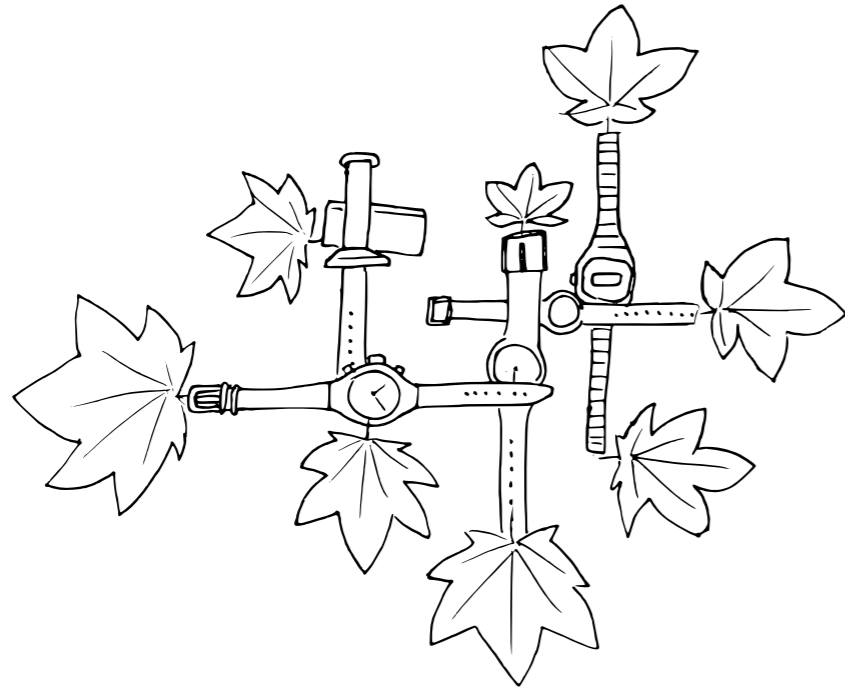
## WORKSPACE

Prepare a clean, comfortable place to work: a studio, workshop, table or desk. Make sure you have adequate light.



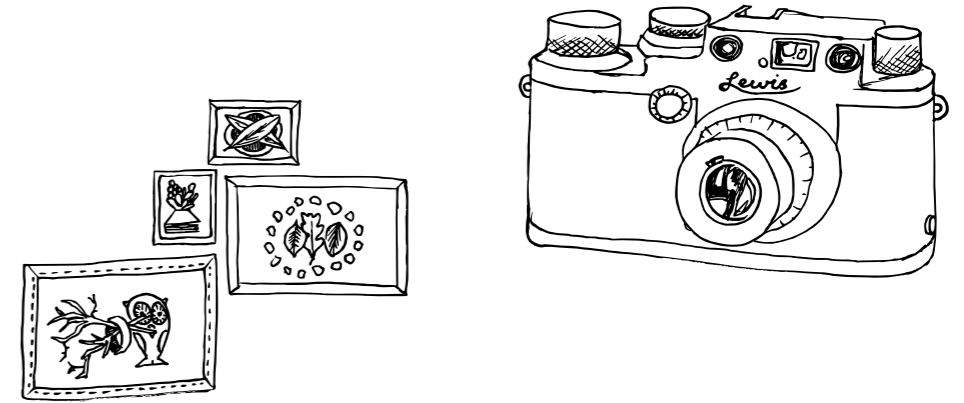
## CREATE

Refer to the booklet titled Exploring the Meaning of Plants through Plantstallations to learn about what meaning native Scottish plants can symbolise. Use this information to help you decide what to use in your plantstallation. Experiment with combining your plants and materials until you have an arrangement you're satisfied with.



## DOCUMENT

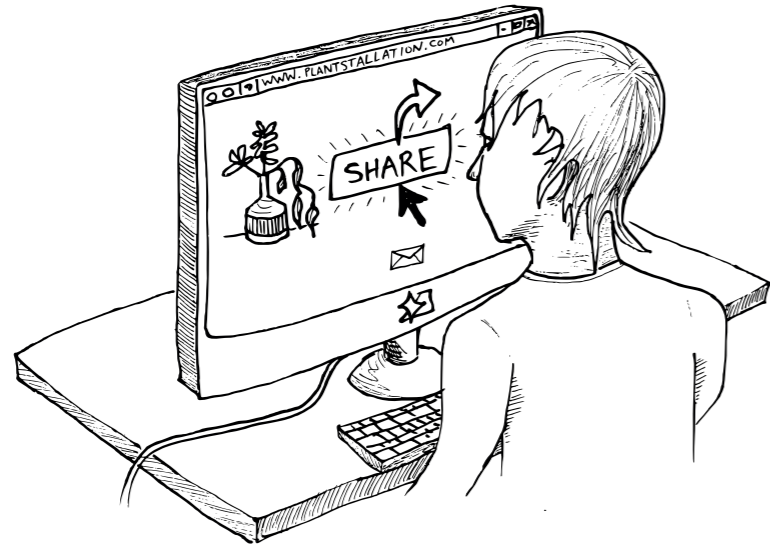
An important part of this process is the ability to take the plantstallation with you easily, wherever you go. Document your work by taking a photograph on your phone, digital or analogue camera, or even a polaroid camera if you've got one! Get your photo printed in a suitable format, and this image of your plantstallation can be placed in your bedroom, your kitchen, in your car, or, if it's small enough, even in your pocket! This talisman-like version of your plantstallation will remind you of the meaning and symbolism found within your work and will be there to hopefully give you motivation and confidence in your daily life. Be sure to frame it if possible, to ensure a long-lasting keepsake of your plantstallation.



**NOTE:** It's not necessary to purchase new frames for your plantstallations - I have found plenty of good quality used frames from charity shops. Always re-use when possible.

## SHARE

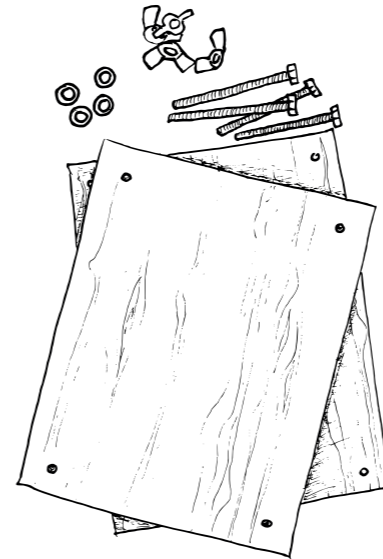
If you're comfortable sharing your work with others, please submit images of your plantstallation(s) and I will add them to the collection on the [plantstallation.com](http://plantstallation.com) website. If this is something you're interested in, please send an email with high quality image files to [mara@plantstallation.com](mailto:mara@plantstallation.com).



## PLANT PRESS:

If you would like to continue the practice of making plantstallations through autumn and winter, when foliage is disappearing or gone, you can save some cuttings from greener months by preserving them with a plant press. With some simple materials, basic hardware, and a couple tools, you can easily construct your own plant press to make plantstallations all year round.

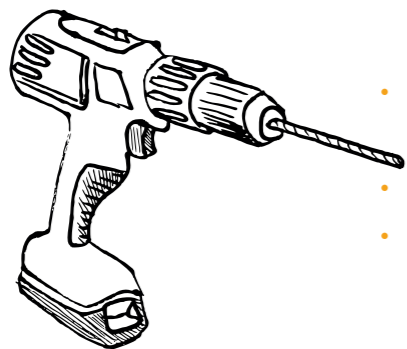
Here's how to make your wooden plant press:



### MATERIALS:

- 2 A3 pieces of wood (29.7x42 cm)
- 4 brass bolts
- 4 brass washers
- 4 brass wing nuts
- cardboard (or thin wood)
- blotting paper





#### ADDITIONAL TOOLS:

- saw (or have your wood cut to size at your local hardware store)
- drill
- sandpaper



#### SIZE

Cut your wood to size (although, you can make your flower press any size you want!). I made mine in A3.

#### DRILL

Stack the two pieces of wood together, drill a hole right through each corner.

**NOTE:** Make sure to choose a drill bit that is the same size as your bolt. I recommend drilling a test hole (using a scrap piece of wood) and making sure the bolt slides through the hole easily.

#### SMOOTH

Use sandpaper to smooth off any rough edges.

#### TRIM

Cut your cardboard and blotting paper to size. Make the cardboard and paper slightly smaller than the two wooden boards. Then trim the corners so that they will fit inside the bolts. Use a piece of the cut cardboard as a guide for cutting the blotting paper to size.

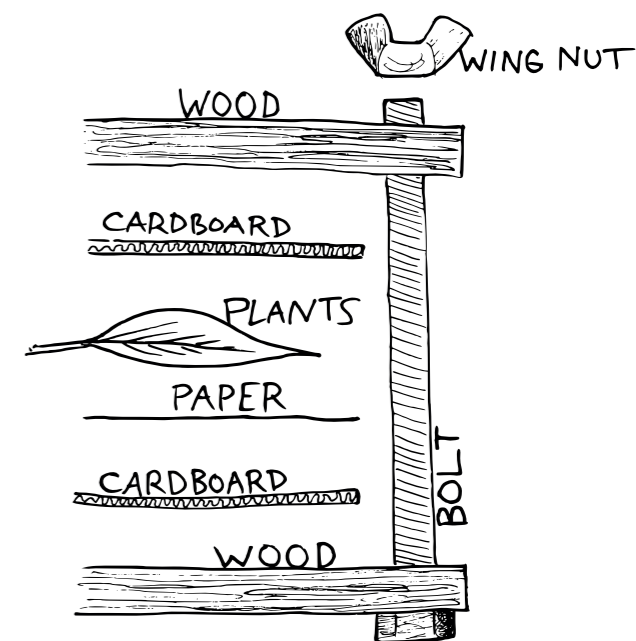
### HERE'S HOW TO PRESS YOUR PLANTS

#### ASSEMBLE

To assemble the press, insert a bolt into each corner of the bottom piece of the press.

#### LAYER

Alternate layers of cardboard, paper, and flowers or leaves inside the press. The number of layers you use will depend on how many flowers you are pressing.



**NOTE:** It is essential to use blotting paper. I tried substituting paper towels instead but the texture of the paper towel was imprinted onto the flowers while pressing.



**Beith, M. (2018).** HEALING THREADS: traditional medicines of the highlands and islands. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

**Cameron, J. (2010).** Gaelic names of plants (Scottish and Irish) : collected and arranged in scientific order, with notes on their etymology, their uses, plant superstitions, etc., among the Celts, with copious Gaelic, English, and scientific indices. General Books.

**Darwin, T. (1996).** The Scots herbal: the plant lore of Scotland. Edinburgh: Mercat Press.

**Fife, H. (1994).** Warriors and guardians: native Highland trees. Glendaruel: Argyll Pub.

**Inkwright, F. (2019).** FOLK MAGIC AND HEALING: an unusual history of everyday plants. S.L.: Liminal 11.

**Kenicer, G.J. (2020).** Scottish plant lore: an illustrated flora. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd.

**Milliken, W. & Bridgewater, S. (2004).** Flora Celtica: plants and people in Scotland. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

**Paterson, J.M. (1996).** Tree Wisdom. Thorsons: London.

**Vickery, R. (1995).** A Dictionary of Plant Lore. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

