

Preserving Flowers and Other Organics in Acrylics

presented by Liquitex®

Recycle garden trimmings by preserving them in acrylic and creating artwork collages with acrylic mediums and paint. This beautiful effect utilizes natural organic items. Offering an unlimited number of options, including collaging finished pieces onto stretched canvas art that can be hung on walls to decorate your home. Items may also be painted and individually glued to candles, wooden boxes, frames, etc. The results are always vastly different depending on the leaves or flowers used, which

expands the creative possibilities. Once all of the items are preserved, the fun and creative process begins. This project is ideal for groups and can also be used for many different age groups; the complexity of the project depends on the individual and their abilities.

Again, the process is not difficult and can be applied either very simplistically or in a more complex fashion, depending on the artistic level of the student. This project can also be combined with collaging recycled newspapers, magazines, books, etc. The collaging can even take place within old books, creating an organic form within a manmade treasured item. Most items will be preserved to the point where they do not yellow or change color over time; others may tend to change color depending on sun exposure, etc. Even if colors change, it is always an interesting evolving project to be enjoyed for many years. If you prefer the color to remain unchanged over time, varnishing will be necessary at the conclusion of finishing your work.

Grade Levels K-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Process

1. Collect fresh garden trimmings and flowers to preserve.
2. Tape a piece of baker's parchment paper to a rigid board, heavy cardboard or cookie sheet. Stretch paper taut and tape on all sides to avoid wrinkling. Lay all organic pieces down and one by one apply a thin layer of Gloss Super Heavy Gel Medium with the



Materials

Organic clippings of grass, leaves, flowers, etc.

Baker's Parchment Paper, available at most grocery stores

[Blick All-Use Masking Tape](#) (23006-1001)

[Liquitex® Gloss Super Heavy Gel Medium](#) (00618-3067), share one 32-oz bottle across class

[Liquitex® Basics Student Acrylics](#), assorted colors (00717-), share at least four 8-oz jars across class

[Plastic Painting Knife](#), 3" trowel (03105-1003), need one per student

[Blick Disposable Palette Paper](#) (03063-1023), pad of 50 sheets, 9" x 12", need one sheet per student

Optional Materials

[Liquitex® Soluvar Gloss Varnish](#) (00669-) available in brush-on or spray

Process, continued

palette knife. It usually takes 24 hours to dry completely for this first application. When the medium is applied it looks white, but will dry clear. Once all organics are coated in a clear gel, this indicates that it is dry.

3. Peel the gel medium organic pieces gently from the parchment paper, being careful not to rip the pieces. Once you have successfully removed them from the rigid board, flip them over and coat them again with Gloss Super Heavy Gel Medium. Let dry for another 24 hours.
NOTE: Drying may take less time if conditions are not humid.
4. Once the second coat is dry and again the organic pieces have a clear coating over them, remove them from the parchment paper. Collect all of your items to the side, to be used in your collage.
5. Organize your pieces and how you would like to collage them; also gather any other items (string, paper, etc.) that you would like to collage with as well.
6. Decide on the type of surface you wish to collage onto: canvas, box, vase, etc.
7. You can also paint on the canvas or other surface before collaging, in a complementary color, to add another dimension to your finished work. We recommend using either Basics Value Acrylics or Soft Body Professional colors, both by Liquitex.
8. Using your palette knife, apply Gloss Super Heavy Gel to the back side of the organic pieces and other materials and start to organize on your canvas or other surface.
9. Once dry (within a couple of hours), you can then paint on top of the collage or embellish with other mediums (see variations below).
10. Let the piece dry for at least 48 hours and then decide if you want to varnish your piece. If you do varnish, it is recommended that you use [Liquitex Soluvar Varnish](#), which is a removable polyurethane varnish that will protect your piece and the preservation of the organic pieces that have been used. Soluvar is available in liquid or aerosol;

either can be used with this type of project, but best results are achieved with the aerosol.

Options

- Use [Liquitex Gloss Gel Medium](#) (00618-1006) instead of Gloss Super Heavy Gel Medium, to achieve fewer dimensions.
- Use [Liquitex Texture Gels](#) to embellish collage, such as Glass Beads (00609-1025) or Black Lava (00609-1005).

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National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories.

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas.

9-12 Students apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

