Royal Botanic Gardens
Kew

Herbarium specimen suncatcher

Kew's Herbarium houses more than seven million preserved plant specimens, pressed and mounted on paper. That's nearly as many plants as people living in London! Working with partners across the world, Kew scientists continue to add to these collections, so that current and future generations can use them for research. With your child, go on a collecting expedition in your local park or woodland, or visit Kew Gardens or Wakehurst. Use fallen leaves and petals to create your own herbarium specimen suncatcher.

You will need:

Collecting bag

Collected items i.e. leaves, petals

Paper plate

Scissors (use with adult supervision)

Sticky back plastic

1 With your child, go for a walk in your local park or woodland, or visit Kew Gardens or Wakehurst. Explore some different plants together.

How many colours and shapes can you see? Gently touch the petals and leaves – what do they feel like? What scents can you smell? Collect some fallen items.

Remember: Do not pick plants unless you have permission.

2 When you get home, take the paper plate and cut a hole in the centre. You may find that it helps to fold the plate in half first. Cover the hole with a piece of sticky back plastic, sticky side up.

If you want to, now is the time to decorate the rim of the plate with your child, using crayons or paint.

Top tip: If you do not have a paper plate or sticky back plastic at home, you could cover a piece of paper with glue or sellotape instead.

3 Now for the fun bit! Spread out your collected items and let your child stick them onto the sticky plastic. The act of picking and sticking is great for developing fine motor skills.

Top tip: Make a hole in the rim of the plate and thread some string though. Hang your suncatcher in a window and enjoy the beautiful colours that filter though.

Taking it forwards:

Botanists classify plants according to their characteristics. With your child, try sorting and grouping your collected items into different categories, such as colour, size, texture and shape. You could use an egg box or sorting bowls to help.