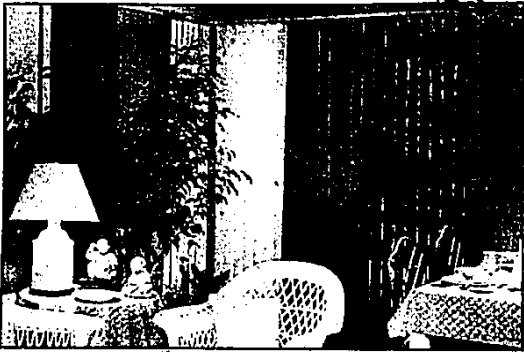


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Dried flowers:

By DOROTHY RUTYNA

It's never too early to begin thinking about preserving flowers for eye-catching home accessories that are down to earth and well within even the most frugal budget.

And stop telling yourself it's too difficult, unaffordable or time consuming. You can do it. It's easier than you think.

The simplest way is to select and gather various weeds and flo-

wers in different stages of development. Strip the foliage. Prepare a lukewarm bath for the plants with soapy water. This dipping into a bath will remove any insects and dust from the material you have gathered. Rinse in clear water and hang up upside down on a line to dry.

You may want to dry some upright in a wide mouth container, such as grasses and Queen Anne's lace. Remember, when you gather, always leave a good supply of flo-

wers and seeds behind. Remove the seeds on the premises and scatter over the area. This will seed the area for the following year. Many plants have become scarce due to the over picking of certain species.

DOCK CAN BE picked when it's still green, then pink, beige and finally brown. Cattails should be gathered in the spring and early summer when they are just forming. If you wait until then become large and brown, they become fuzzy and tend to burst.

The following wild flowers are on the Michigan protected list. This means they are not to be picked or removed from their native sites: trailing arbutus, birds-foot violets, climbing bittersweet, club mosses (ground pine), flowering dogwood, North American lotus (a type of waterlily), Michigan holly (winterberry), pipsissewa (prince's pine), lady slippers — all species (Michigan orchids), and trillium, — all species. You can be fined for having them in your possession.

Pick goldenrod when it is green and just beginning to show yellow. If you pick when in full bloom, it will fuzz and fall apart as it dries. Yarrow can be picked when it is white and in full bloom. It also can be picked after it has gone into seed and is a beautiful brown shade.

PRESSING IS another inexpensive method of preserving flowers and foliage. Pick flowers after the dew has dried on the plant. These can be placed between sheets of newspapers and with a heavy weight placed on top. I like to use an old telephone book. Place the flowers and foliage between the pages and put a couple of bricks on top the book to press firmly. Depending upon the texture of the flowers, the length of time to dry varies.

Your selection need not be limited to naturally flat blossoms, like pansies, for pressing. But do select flowers with small calyxes. Violets, pinks, columbine, larkspur, baby's breath, sweet alysum, primrose, salvia, daisies and forget-me-not are a few to try.

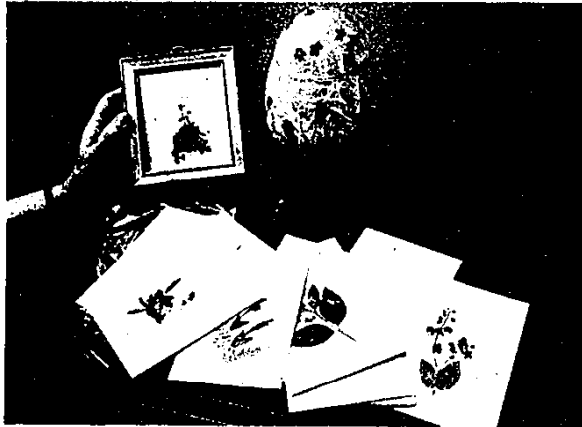
Drying by pressing takes anywhere from three to 10 days.

Individual florets of geranium, zinnia and marigolds are colorful additions to pressed flower designs.

Another curing agent is a combination of cornmeal and borax. They are inexpensive and readily available at your nearest supermarket. Mix five pounds of cornmeal with 25 ounces (one large box) of borax. If you dry the mixture after each use (in the oven at 150 degrees for one hour) and store it in an airtight container, it can be used over and over again.

POUR AN INCH of the mix into a container. Trim the stems of your flowers to one-half inch. Place the flowers on the mix, face up. Push some of the mix under the base of the blossom so that the outer petals are supported in their natural position.

Then using a spoon, sprinkle the mix over the top of the flower. Be



Dried flowers can be used in a variety of ways. Mrs. Rutyna makes note paper to send to "very special people." She has also used the flower arrangements in pictures and creating luminaries—in which the delicate flowers' beauty is further enhanced by the soft glow of candlelight from within. (Staff photo by Bô Woodring)

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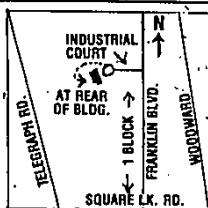


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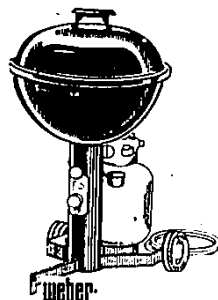


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