

Weavers demonstrate their craft

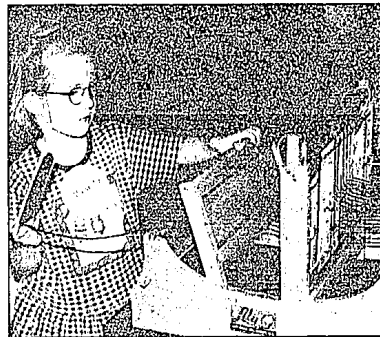
The Michigan Weaver's Guild celebrated National Spinning and Weaving Week at the Farmington Hills Library on Twelve Mile Rd. recently. About 60 parents and children

attended the Saturday Oct. 9 event.

Children had a chance to work a spinning wheel and a loom as well as see how felt is made out of wool.



Work in progress: Chris Livingston and his mom, Cynthia, learn about the felting process where wool is rolled and pounded and turned into felt.



Good job: Miranda Shelly, 4-1/2, of Farmington Hills made weaving on a loom look easy.



Spinning wheel: Guild member Nancy gives hands-on experience to 10-year-old Kurt Smith of Farmington Hills on the spinning wheel as others look on.



Demonstrating the loom: Guild member Bob Owen of Livonia shows 5-year-old Noor of Farmington how a small loom operates.



Wild and wooly: Cynthia Livingston of Farmington Hills and son Chris, 5, feel the wool before it is spun.

Club offers tips on drying flowers

The Hill & Dale Garden Club of Farmington says many common bedding flowers currently in bloom are great for drying.

Moonshead is recommended because it keeps its deep blue color when dry. Also, perennial blue salvia Victoria retains its color when dry. Geraniums, especially the red ones, dry nicely. Gather them up in bunches of five and hang them upside down to dry.

Ivy can be dried by hanging short strands to dry. Longer pieces can be coiled around cans to dry. Ivy is a great accent to any wreath or arrangement.

Blue ageratum dries to a nice purple. Yarrow, such as summer petals and corrie queen, provide fullness and contrast to other flowers in a dried arrangement.

Double-flowered asters dry nicely if you cut them before they are fully open, and then hang them in a warm, breezy place so they will dry quickly. Celosias are also great for drying. Autumn joy sedum will dry to a dusty rose color.

In using the air-drying process, you will need a dark, dry, warm place, with good air circulation. A bare with a hay loft or an attic or an area in a garage or shed with no direct sunlight is recommended.

Following are a few tips that will help you in air drying your plants:

■ Cut your flowers in mid-morning or early evening when they are free of dew but not wilting from the heat. With most varieties, you should strip the foliage from the bottom part of the stems.

■ To dry, make bunches of flowers about one inch in diameter (at the bottom of the stems). Wrap them tightly with a rubber band or twist tie and hang them upside down, leaving plenty of space between bunches. Drying time will vary, depending on the thickness of the flower as well as the heat, humidity and air circulation in your drying room. The plants are dry when the thickest part of the blossom feels dry and the stem snaps when you bend it.

■ Store your flowers between layers of tissue paper in a covered box out of the light and away from potential pests, or you can just leave them hanging where you dried them until you are ready to make an arrangement.

Some flowers can be dried, but may need some special handling. Use silica gel crystals with delicate or long-petaled flowers like pansies, zinnias, lilies, dogwood

blossoms and garden roses. This sand-like material will absorb all the water in the flower, but leaves the petals and color strong.

Put an inch-deep layer of the silica in an airtight plastic container, then place the flower stems, heads up, on the silica. Gently pour more silica on the flowers until they are covered.

Silica reusable
After about 48 hours, lift them out with a spoon and check to see if they are dry. Handle them very carefully as they will be brittle. Store the dried blossoms in another air-tight container with a small amount of silica on the bottom. Silica can be reused almost forever. Just place used silica on a shallow pan and put in the oven on low heat to dry out.

Glycerine can be used to preserve foliage static or baby's breath. Mix one part glycerin with two parts hot water for large-stemmed flowers (such as static) or a three to one water-to-glycerin ratio for delicate flowers (such as baby's breath).

Put four inches of the mix in a plastic container, then stand the freshly cut flowers upright in it. Within three to four days, the glycerine will have replaced the

water in the plants' stems, leaving the plants soft and natural looking.

Bunch the flowers together and hang them upside down as in air drying until the stems feel dry. Use vegetable-based glycerine which can be purchased at the drug store in small amounts. Vegetables, such as chile peppers, make wonderful accents in a dried arrangement or wreath. Let them turn red on the plant, then cut the entire branch and hang it upside down to dry.

Mix bulbs of soft-necked garlic (dried and braided) with dried flowers and chiles. Leeks and garlic chives produce flowers that are dryable, but be sure to cut the flowers when the buds first begin to open. Artichokes have a striking effect. Harvest just as the purple petals begin to appear in the center and then hang to dry.

Common ordinary herbs such as sage, thyme, marjoram, rosemary and oregano make great additions to wreaths and arrangements. The flowers of tansy, dill and opal basil also dry well. Lavender is widely used as a dry flower.

Ornamental grasses and grains make a striking addition to autumn arrangements, such as, milo, wheat and sunflowers.

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