

PLANT YOUR PAPER

BACKGROUND

Creating notecards out of discarded paper is a fun (and messy) way to celebrate Earth Day or any day. This STEAM activity creating notecards incorporates recycling or upcycling principles and can even serve as a great way to spread awareness about native plants with native wildflower seeds!

MATERIALS

- A mix of shredded papers - the more recycled content paper, the better. A mix of copy paper, newsprint, tissue paper, and even toilet paper can be used
- Water in a large bowl or bucket
- Blender or hand-crank egg beater to make it really hands on
- Food coloring (optional)
- Adjustable window screen or sheets of window screening
- A small Embroidery hoop, two equally sized frames, OR a strainer/drain tray
- A 9X13 baking dish or a shallow tub that will fit the frame or strainer/drain tray
- Seed mix (we like wildflower seeds from <https://www.ufseeds.com/wildflower-seeds> but any native seeds, herbs, or even cat grass seeds make a great card)
- Rolling pin or any small, heavy cylinder
- Towels or felt squares
- Cookie cutters or other forms to trace shapes



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PROCEDURE

Step 1. Gather paper that has been finely cut or processed through a cross-cutting shredder. ~2c of paper shreds for each seed notecard

Step 2. Place paper in the bucket or large bowl filled with warm water overnight, adding water as necessary to maintain a slurry mixture

Step 3. To make the paper pulp, place the slurry in a blender or use a hand mixer to break down the pulp until the mixture is quite soupy but not a homogenous liquid. Add food coloring if desired.

Step 4. Set up your screen by either placing a sheet of window screen between two 3X5 picture frames with the backing and glass removed or stretch screen in an Embroidery Hoop or layer a piece of screen over a Strainer/Drainer. Note that if you don't have window screen you can try hosiery stretched over a frame.

Step 5. Fill the baking dish or tub with ~1 inch of water and with the screen setup submerged, pour paper pulp through the screen.

Step 6. Lift the screen setup gently, allowing water to drain through, then use your fingers to spread the pulp evenly on the surface of the screen. Add seeds, small flowers, colored paper confetti, or bits of thread to be decorative.

Step 7. Press gently on the pulp to squeeze out as much excess water as possible being careful to keep the screen flat then lay the screen on a towel or stack of felt squares and cover with another piece of screen and more towel/felt. Using a rolling pin or glass, gently roll back and forth over the pulp-covered screen to squeeze out additional water.

Step 8. Remove towel and screen then leave the paper to dry overnight, if paper does not dry flat, press under a heavy book.

Step 9. Paper can be decorated and cut into shapes for notes after drying.

After the notecard has been delivered, it can be planted by burying in ~1/2 inch of soil and watering. Keep seeds moist until they sprout by watering daily.



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