

## HOW TO MAKE PRESSED FLOWER LANTERNS TO CELEBRATE THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

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The sun has reached its peak angle and is in its full, brilliant splendor throughout the long summer days before making its slow descent toward its lower arc during winter's relative darkness. We have reached a turning point in the year. The summer solstice, coming from the Latin words "sol" (sun) and "stitium" (still or stopped), is the longest day of the year and the shortest night. It is a day of celebration, with fires and flower lanterns being lit across the land to honor the strength of the sun.

Fire has always been an important tradition in solstice celebrations around the world. In ancient times it was thought that lighting a fire on the summer solstice would boost the sun's energy for the remainder of the growing season and give encouragement for a good harvest in the fall. In modern times, a fire is not always a practical way to celebrate. Instead, light a candle and place it into homemade pressed flower lanterns to light the way as we encourage the energy of the sun to brighten the rest of the year.

### Using Pressed Flowers in Your Summer Solstice Celebration

It is fitting to use flowers in a summer solstice celebration. After all, gardens are overflowing with colors as the summer months approach, with flowers stretching their colorful heads towards the sun for solar-infused energy. When picking flowers for this project, be mindful to only collect from plants that are plentiful. Leave enough for our pollinators! You should also search for flowers that are naturally flat and have single-layered petals so that you can easily attach them to your lantern once dried. Some of our favorites include pansies, violas, daisies, cosmos, and sweet alyssum.

### Summer Solstice Lantern

#### Ingredients:

- Glass jars used for canning or recycled glass pasta sauce jars (they should have smooth sides)
- Pressed flowers
- Mod Podge or white school glue
- 1-inch wide artist paintbrush
- Forceps (or tweezers) for ease of picking up pressed flowers
- Tea lights or battery-operated lights for children
- Optional: 12-gauge wire to make a handle for carrying

## Directions:

Pick and press your flowers. We find using a press is the best option, but in a pinch, you could also press them between pages of heavy books with white tissue paper to protect the pages.

Thoroughly clean and dry the jar intended for use.

Ever so slightly water down white glue or use Mod Podge as-is. We prefer the frosted look of matte Mod Podge.

Using your artist paintbrush, swipe some of the paste across the outside of one of the sides of your jar. You should cover the side in a thin layer.

Using forceps, gently lay pressed flowers or ferns onto the paste, being careful not to damage petals. You may need to hold sections of the flower down for a few seconds using the forceps to ensure that they adhere properly. Continue this process around the entire exterior of the jar. Allow to dry thoroughly.

To protect your design, swipe a layer of paste over the pressed flowers that are adhered to your jar. This ensures that they will stay attached and last longer. Allow to dry thoroughly.

This step is optional. You may wish for your lantern to have a handle. If this is the case, fold your 12-gauge wire in half and begin twisting a handle, starting at the fold. Once it is your desired length, wrap the two loose ends of the wire around the jar and pull them through the small loop that was created when you folded the wire in half. Make sure these pieces of wire are beneath the lip of the jar and are kept snug so they do not slide off. After the wires have gone through the loop on the handle, cross them over and wrap them around to the other side again. Twist the two wires together to firmly hold them in place. Trim the ends or curl them around a pencil for added decoration. Place a tea light into your flower lantern. We prefer beeswax tea lights, as they burn cleanly. If you are worried about the candles shifting too much, you can add a ½-inch layer of sand or salt to the bottom of the lantern to help hold the candle in place.

## In Closing,

Days will grow shorter, nights will grow longer, and still, the natural world is filled with vibrant and colorful life throughout the year. Over the centuries, the summer solstice has inspired many midsummer celebrations involving bonfires, singing, and dancing in celebration of the natural world. Connecting with the cycles of the planet and building your own traditions such as these pressed flower lanterns will help you mark the passage of time and celebrate with loved ones. However you choose to cherish the day, be sure to enjoy the longest day of the year to its fullest!