



# Plantable *seed* paper

*Here's a crafty family, kid or night-with-the-girlfriends activity that creates gifts that keep on giving! Seed paper uses recyclables, can be made into cards, bookmarks, gift tags and small gift boxes, then grows the herbs and flowers whose seeds you've embedded (indoors in pots or outside in the spring).*

## **MATERIALS**

### *scrap paper*

magazines — not high gloss, pre-soaked non-waxed boxes, old greeting cards, paper grocery bags, flyers, unused paper napkins, phone book pages, envelopes, receipts, etc.

### *seeds*

must be small and flat; good choices are poppy, English daisy, evening primrose, foxglove, forget-me-not and hollyhock flowers, and basil, thyme and mint herbs.

## **EQUIPMENT**

### *paper scraps*

### *scissors or paper shredder*

(you can also tear by hand)

### *blender*

### *measuring cup*

### *large container*

(something to hold the water and paper mixture; a sink works, or a large bowl or plastic tub)

### *old frame (e.g. picture frame) or scrap wood and screws to make your own*

(measure to fit inside the large container)

### *mesh screen*

(like the kind used for screen doors — ask at your local hardware store; the stiffer the better)

### *tacks or stapler*

### *wax paper (size of your frame)*

### *glass jar or rolling pin (helps press water out)*

### *old dish cloths (must be larger than your frame)*

### *cardboard*

### *newspapers*

### *iron*

*stamps, ribbon, ink, and felts to decorate your gift cards, homemade coupons, etc.*

- Tack or staple the screen tightly across the frame. Tear or shred scrap paper into small pieces (about 1-inch square; the smaller the better.) Soak these in a sink of warm water for about 30 minutes. (Different papers produce different effects so don't be shy about experimenting).

- Half fill the blender with the paper mixture and water. Blend until smooth.

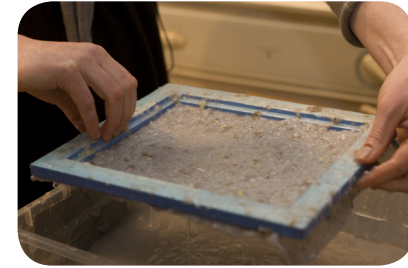
- Add blended mixture (pulp) to the large container, about three blender loads.

- Stir in seeds (from suggested list).

- Dip the screened frame into the container and move it gently from side to side (horizontally) in the pulp mixture. Try and catch an even layer of pulp onto the screen. (Use your finger as a measuring stick. The thinner the layer the better, because it will dry faster and be easier to cut and craft!)

- Let the water drain through as you lift the frame. Rest the frame on the side of the container. Place a wax paper sheet

on top and roll a glass jar across the paper to squish all the moisture out.





- Once the dripping has stopped, carefully place the frame — pulp side down — onto a dry dishcloth.
- Carefully lift the screen. (You might need to tap it with your fingers from the opposite side.) The paper should drop out easily onto the cloth. (Note: paper that sticks to the screen probably hasn't been drained well enough.)
- Put a dishcloth on top of your seed paper sheet — now you're ready to put another on top.
- Once you have a stack of seed paper sheets separated by dishcloths, put a piece of cardboard on top of the stack and apply pressure to squeeze out any remaining water.
- Let the paper dry completely. (You may have to leave it overnight, depending on how thick your sheets are. You may also have to swap out wet dish towels for dry ones.)
- Gently pull cloth pieces away. As a finishing step, place paper between dry dish towels and press with a hot iron. This will help make it flat and dry out the final damp spots.

Voila! Sheets of seed paper that can be made into great gifts! (Don't forget to include planting instructions and the type of seeds!)

#### PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS

The 'paper' part of your creation will compost naturally, so you can plant them either in indoor pots, or outside in the spring or summer. Cut into strips for a colourful flower or herb border in your garden!



#### INSPIRED BY NATURE — BIOMIMICRY

Humans ask nature 'How do you do that?', then try to imitate those strategies — that's biomimicry. The word 'paper' comes from the Greek term for the papyrus used by ancient Egyptians for their writing material. In Europe and North America, paper used to be made from cotton and linen rags. (The Chinese had already been making paper from bamboo and mulberry plants for hundreds of years before then, but those were hard to come by in the west.) In 1719, French scientist René Réaumur noticed the nest-building behaviour of paper wasps and suggested trying wood — the rest is history. (Ever noticed how wasps' nests seem to last forever? We've still got a lot to learn!)

#### CHECK OUT THESE LINKS:

[http://www.funsci.com/fun3\\_en/paper/paper.htm](http://www.funsci.com/fun3_en/paper/paper.htm)

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/04/biomimetics/tom-mueller-text>

[http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/janine\\_benyus\\_shares\\_nature\\_s\\_designs.html](http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/janine_benyus_shares_nature_s_designs.html)