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THE GREENS, SILCHAR

# Drying and preserving of flowers and leaves

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Flowers are closely associated with mankind from the dawn of civilization. Flowers, the crowning beauty of God's creation, are inseparable part of human joy and sorrow. It is said that man is born with flowers, lives with flowers and finally dies with flowers. The scope of utility and importance of flowers have been realized throughout the world and in this modern age, floriculture has developed into a profitable industry. Floriculture has tremendous potential for export besides home consumption. There is an increasing demand all over the world for the decoration of living and working places with eco-friendly things like foliage and flowers. Fresh flowers and foliage though exquisite in their beauty are highly expensive, perishable and delicate in nature and cannot retain their beauty and fresh look for a long time in spite of using best chemicals for enhancing vase life. Moreover, fresh flowers and foliage are not available all round the year in all places. In this context flowers can be dried, preserved and processed to retain its beauty as well as everlasting value. The use of dried flowers has made it possible to enjoy their beauty for several years. Many value added products can be made from dried flowers such as collages, flower pictures, flower balls, greeting cards, covers, pomanders, festive decorations, bouquets and wreaths, sweet-smelling pot pourries etc. Dried flowers are long lasting, can be used several times and also meet the decorative demand throughout the year. India, with its vast resources, varied products and experience in the field of dried flowers and plant parts enjoy a distinct advantage in the world export market. The country also enjoys the benefit of cheap

labour and favourable climate as against other countries. The beauty and value of the dried flowers are that they can be kept and cherished for years, which survive the cold of winter and heat of summer. With growing eco-consciousness, the use of more and more nature-friendly things like these come as a natural choice for decoration. The life of dried flowers varies according to the species, texture of their petals and total consistency of flowers. Dried flowers can be effectively used for making decorative floral craft items for interior decoration and commercial exploitation.

## Steps in dry flower production

### 1. Selection of materials

Plants for preserving can be collected throughout the year. Flowers at different stages of development can be picked for drying purpose. Avoid collecting plants when they are wet. After cutting, strip the leaves from the stem, since foliage on the stems do not dry properly. Almost all plant materials can be dried everything from flowers, foliage and branches to grains, cones, nuts, berries and other fruits. Do not collect plants when they are wet or moist from dew. Select plant materials that are without pest or disease problems as any flaw in the bloom will be magnified in drying process. Stems, twigs, branches, bark, leaves/foliage, flowers, thorns/spines, fruits, cones, seeds, roots, lichens, fleshy fungi, mosses, selaginellas, ferns, etc. can be utilized for making various value-added floral crafts and flower arrangements which are non-perishable and have longer life indoors.