

Introduction:

Congratulations on choosing the *Microfleur* flower press. Please read these instructions carefully. With a little practice you will soon be pressing flowers, leaves, and other pieces of flora in just minutes, using *Microfleur* and your microwave oven.

Description of *Microfleur*:

Your *Microfleur* kit should contain:

- A 2 platens
- B 2 clips (4 clips for the MAX)
- C 1 fill-pack, consisting of:
 - 2 pads
 - 2 fabric sheets

The fill-pack is packed in a plastic bag which is used for storage only and must not be used in the microwave oven.

Precautions:

The normal safety precautions printed in your microwave oven manual should be followed when using your *Microfleur*. In particular, you should use care when handling your *Microfleur* after exposure to microwaves, as hot vapours are generated during drying. Do not use metal objects such as pins, staples, paper clips, wire or metal foil in or on your *Microfleur*. This also applies to metallic paints and glitter, which are sometimes used on bridal bouquets and other decorative floral arrangements.

Microfleur must not be used to heat food or allowed to come in direct contact with food or used in the microwave over while food is being cooked.

After using your *Microfleur*, wipe the inside surfaces of your oven with a damp cloth to remove any condensed vapours or residue.

Using the Microwave Oven:

Any normal household microwave oven is suitable for using your *Microfleur*. Do not use in conventional ovens. If your oven is a combination microwave/convection oven,

make sure the oven is cooled to room temperature before using it for *Microfleur* flower pressing. Your microwave should be used on the “high” (full power) setting. When pressing very dry specimens, or when specimens are approaching the final stages of drying, it may be advisable to place a container of water in the oven with your *Microfleur*.

If your oven cannot be accurately set for seconds timing, you should use a watch or clock with a second hand or digital timer, and switch the oven controls manually.

Loading the *Microfleur*:

Place 1 platen ribbed side down on the bench, place one pad on top and then one piece of fabric on top of the pad.

Place the specimens to be pressed on the fabric sheet making sure they sit flat and do not overlap or touch each other. It is advisable to load similar specimens for on pressing, rather than different types of specimens together. You can load as many specimens as will fit within the fabric liners, so long as they do not touch or overlap. Carefully place the second fabric sheet, pad and platen (ribbed side up) on top of these. (See fig. 1)

Apply a little pressure to the top platen while you slide the two clips into place on opposite sides of the platens, so the whole assembly is firmly held together with the clips. (See fig. 2)

Do not overload your *Microfleur* with specimens. The clips are designed to slide on fairly easily. Forcing the clips on when the *Microfleur* is overfilled could result in permanent distortion of the platens.

Your *Microfleur* is now ready to put in the microwave.

Pressing times:

There a number of factors which will influence the time needed for pressing. The most important factors are the power of the

microwave and the amount of fluids contained in the specimens to be dried. Lower powered ovens (500 watts) will require longer times than higher powered models (1000 watts). Fleshy or moist flowers will take longer than dry flowers and leaves. Specimens should be dried in stages, starting with an initial burst, and followed by as many shorter bursts as needed to completely dry the specimen. As a guideline, initial bursts should be about 45 seconds for a 600W oven, 30 seconds for 750W and 20 seconds for a 900W. Secondary bursts should be about half to one third of the initial burst.

Specimens may partially dry after they are picked, or if they are picked after lengthy periods of exposure to strong winds, sun, or low humidity. Under these circumstances, or when pressing any specimen for the first time, it is advisable to reduce the suggested initial burst time by half.

If you are using a container of water in your oven (see section on “Using the Microwave Oven”) you will need to extend your exposure times considerably, probably about double the times you would use without water.

There are a number of advantages in using short bursts of drying instead of a single continuous period:

- o The method gives better control over the final product
- o Where specimens have thick and thin portions (e.g. calyx and petals) the thicker parts can be dried progressively without destroying the thinner portions
- o Some rearrangement of petals and other parts is possible while the specimen still retain some moisture.

The aim is to obtain a reasonably stiff specimen which resists drooping and has a dry or ‘papery’ feeling when touched. After the specimen is cool, touching between the thumb and forefinger, or to the lip, is a good way to determine whether moisture is still present.

Excessive drying will result in brittleness, particularly for thin specimens and parts such as leaves and petals, and eventually these parts will scorch if the exposure time is too long. Freshly picked specimens will take longer to dry than specimens which have been cut and allowed to stand. Fresh specimens are less prone to burning except where they have been exposed to lengthy periods of strong winds and sun.

With practice it is possible to press quite large and succulent flowers with *Microfleur*, including such things as whole roses, chrysanthemums, and camellias. Because of the amount of moisture in these, it can take several minutes to them successfully, but this should be done in stages. “Resting” the specimen by opening *Microfleur*, and allowing it to stand for 20 – 30 seconds between bursts, assists the process by allowing excess vapours to be ventilated naturally. Exposure times should be shortened to 10, or even 5 seconds, as the specimen approaches the final stages of drying.

Useful hints:

Not all flowers and parts of plants can be successfully pressed using *Microfleur*. In general, anything which can be pressed by conventional methods can be pressed in the *Microfleur*. The advantages of using *Microfleur* are that results are almost immediate, and colour retention is usually very good.

With practice you will learn the best specimens to use with your *Microfleur*. Large or fleshy specimens like lilies, tulips, magnolias, begonias, and some impatiens are difficult, or impossible to press. Squeezing the petals between the fingers is a good test. If squeezing produces liquid, then the result is not likely to be very good, however this is not always the case, as flowers like jonquils, daffodils and some orchids can be pressed quite successfully with *Microfleur*.

For difficult shapes such as orchids, iris and flowers with bulky receptacles or long trumpet-like shapes, you may consider dismantling the flower and pressing the components, or cutting them so they lay reasonably flat. These can then be used to reconstruct the flower in a display, or create your own design.

Pressed flowers tend to lose their colour in time. Factors which affect fading are: exposure to light, density of colour, thickness and cell structure of the plant.

Some colours such as certain reds, violet shades, and some greens, and stronger colours may bleed in some variegated flowers.

Some leaves tend to lose their green colouring and turn to autumn shades. In some cases, this can be due to overdrying, but it is also unavoidable with certain leaves.

It is best to start with simple, flat specimens with a single layer of petals, and develop experience before trying more complicated specimens. Make sure the specimens you wish to press are fresh and dry (no visible signs of moisture). Newly opened specimens are less likely to brown than old flowers or fronds.

Buds may be sliced into half, and thick stems may be shaved down using a sharp blade so they sit flat. Thick flowers such as chrysanthemum, aster and gerbera, can usually be pressed successfully in the *Microfleur*, without trimming the calyx. Don't limit yourself to flowers. Try herbs, leaves, stems, petals, stamens and other pieces. Fern fronds and tendrils from climbers or creepers make excellent decorations and adornments.

If you have trouble removing your pressed flowers from the fabric, try gently stretching the fabric in several directions to aid their release.

Use flat nosed tweezers or forceps when handling your specimens, and after pressing

store your specimens between sheets of paper or in folders for future use.

Pressed flowers can be used for many purposes, such as personalised stationery, cards, bookmarks, menus, etc. They can be mounted and framed, laminated or used for decoupage.

There a number of craft books available with instructions and suggestions, but don't allow your imagination to be limited by other people's ideas.

To glue your specimens onto paper, card, etc try any good quality PVA clear-drying glue or rubber cement. Use a small artist's paint brush, or tooth pick, satay stick or similar, to apply the glue.

Care of your *Microfleur*:

Your *Microfleur* platens and clips should be wiped with a damp cloth after use, and dried before storage.

The fabric liners of the fill-pack are made of cotton lawn which should be washed and ironed regularly to remove stains.

Alternatively they can be replaced with good quality pure cotton material.

The pads should not be washed even though they will become stained. The pads will last for many hundreds of cycles with normal use; however they gradually deteriorate and will need to be replaced. They may also become damaged by scorching if excessive drying times are used.

Replacement fill-packs are available from your distributor. Use of non-genuine pads could result in excessive temperatures, and could void your warranty.

Warranty:

Any *Microfleur* found to be defective in materials or workmanship will be replaced free of charge when returned to the distributor in its original box.

This warranty is effective for one year from the date of purchase and is extended to the original purchaser only. Damage caused by

improper use or handling is excluded from the warranty. Fill-pack materials are consumable materials and shall be replaced at the user's cost. Transportation costs on ***Microfleur*** units submitted for replacement must be born by the purchaser. No other warranties are expressed or implied.