

Hapa zome – colours from fresh flowers and leaves

Today you can:

- Learn a simple way to extract colours from fresh flowers and leaves and ‘print’ them onto fabric and paper.

About hapa zome or eco-printing

- Many plants have colours in them that we can use creatively – or industrially. Think of indigo-dyed denim jeans (although the blue dye is chemically synthesized now).
- This is one way to extract colour from plant material but tends to be quite subtle and isn't very long lasting. It is improved by careful selection of material, using animal-based fabric and mordanting it. Other, more permanent, ways are by bundle dyeing (including with steam) and making liquid dyes from plants for inks, paints and immersion. We have some books and examples of some of these.
- The best results are with the juiciest material. Strongly coloured flowers work best. The community garden is very dry at the moment!



In the garden:

1. Find a space on the table and let Rebecca know you are ready.
2. Choose either a white cotton fabric square or watercolour paper.
3. Choose one or more flowers and/or leaves and place it on the fabric/paper. If you want to hunt the garden, look for small flat flowers and leaves that look juicy. Beware of stinging nettles – they work well but you need gloves to work with them comfortably. You can use a pencil to write the plant name.
4. Cover with clear plastic (document folders work well) above and below.
5. Using the end of a broomstick (or wooden spoon) gently rub over the flower/leaf so the juices escape and mark it. Repeat until it starts to lose its form (goes mushy).
6. Peel off the plastic and the flowers/leaves and see what you have. Can you see the flower/leaf shapes? If they are indistinct, repeat with others.



When you get home you can try:

1. Different plant material and at different times of the year. We think Spring and early Summer would be good.
2. Different fabric or paper. Silk works well, especially if it has been pre-treated to accept the colour better. Diluted soy milk works well.
3. Try wetting the fabric first – we find you get more colour but it also disperses more.
4. Try different tools – rubber or wooden mallets onto paving stones can work well. Or pebbles.
5. Try folding the fabric over so you get a mirror image.