

Ellen Hutchins

SEAWEED PRESSING

*Step-by-step instructions
to preserve a specimen
and create seaweed art*

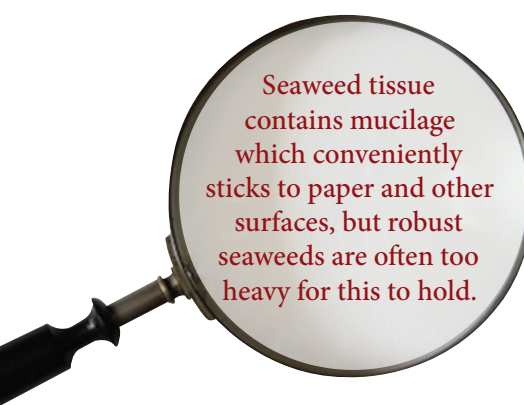


SEAWEED PRESSING

These instructions take you through the steps needed to create your own seaweed specimens i.e. seaweeds dried and mounted on paper.

SELECTING SEAWEEDS

The best seaweeds to use with these guidelines are small, delicate specimens that are a few cells thick. Using these gives you several hundred species of Irish seaweed that are suitable for pressing. Our seas are home to lovely filmy reds and greens, as well as intricately branched aquatic shrubs and bizarre young kelps.



Seaweed tissue contains mucilage which conveniently sticks to paper and other surfaces, but robust seaweeds are often too heavy for this to hold.

WHAT TO TAKE TO THE BEACH

- A waterproof container or zip lock bags or to collect your seaweeds in
- A pair of small scissors
- The Mini Guide to Seaweeds if you want to learn more about the seaweeds you see.



The Mini Guide to Seaweeds - Our free Mini Guide to Seaweeds provides information on identifying seaweeds. You can download it from this page: www.ellenhutchins.com/seaweeds-of-bantry-bay/

COLLECTING SEAWEEDS



Check the weather forecast and tide tables



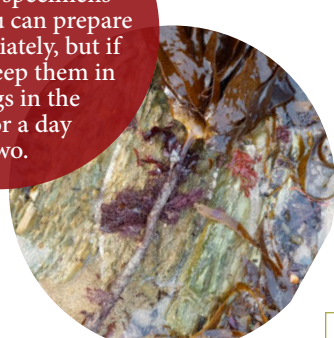
Take care on slippery rocks

WHEN TO GO? WHERE TO GO?

Suitable seaweeds can be found growing on rocks and on other seaweeds on the lower shore (accessible at low tide), in rock pools, or cast up after storms.

We suggest working with postcard-sized A6 mounts, so select pieces of seaweed that are an appropriate size.

When picking small red, green and brown seaweeds growing in pools and on rocks on the lower shore, collect a tiny sample of each by cutting them, so as not to disturb the environment excessively.



Small zip lock bags are handy for you to collect your specimens in. Ideally, you can prepare them immediately, but if necessary, keep them in these bags in the fridge for a day or two.

You may find fresh small seaweeds which have been ripped from their deep habitat by rough weather, or a kelp that has some nice little red seaweeds growing on its stipe (stem). None of these will be able to re-attach or grow, so rinse off the sand and put them in your collection bag.

YOU WILL NEED:

- ☐ plastic zip lock bags or waterproof container for collecting seaweeds in
- ☐ a mounting dish, which can be a shallow, pale-coloured waterproof dish or container which is larger than the size of the paper you expect to use
- ☐ wooden kebab or cocktail sticks and a small, soft, pointed paint brush for arranging your seaweeds
- ☐ sheets of watercolour paper to use as mounts (we recommend 250gsm white acid-free cotton paper)
- ☐ sheets of newspaper or kitchen roll as a blotting surface to absorb the water as your specimens dry
- ☐ pieces of black weed-block material to use as a non-stick covering for your specimens (available from the [Ellen Hutchins online shop](#))
- ☐ two boards (such as wooden chopping boards)
- ☐ some heavy books / bricks / kitchen weights, or something similar
- ☐ a pencil for describing your collection
- ☐ small sharp scissors
- ☐ a small tube/stick of PVA glue.

and seaweeds!



Introduction to Seaweeds: A guide to inner Bantry Bay This little book on seaweeds provides an informative and easy to read introduction to the seaweeds of Bantry Bay and beyond. It covers the most commonly found seaweeds, zonation of the shore, the importance of seaweeds and the historical role of seaweeds in Irish culture. €12 from [Ellen Hutchins website shop](#).

SPREADING AND PRESSING YOUR SEAWEEDS

Read these instructions right through before you start. Think about the seaweeds you have collected, and decide how you would like to present and use them; on what kind of paper, or in another crafting idea (see following page). Seaweeds are best used fresh, but may be kept in a sealed plastic bag in a cool place for a day or so, if necessary.

BEFORE YOU START

Find a convenient table, desk or work surface that can have damp things put onto it or protect the surface appropriately.

You will need the materials listed on the previous page. Lay them all out before you start. You will also need a bowl of fresh water in which to wash your seaweeds.

Allow at least an hour (ideally two hours) to prepare your collected specimens for drying. We have designed these instructions to allow you to prepare several specimens at a time.

STEP
1



Half fill your mounting dish with clean, fresh water. Rinse your seaweeds in a separate bowl of water to remove sand and other debris. Select and transfer one piece of seaweed to the mounting dish, then tease out by hand and with the wooden sticks.

STEP
2

Select your preferred mounting paper. If you want to use the seaweed as a herbarium specimen, identify it now. Write its name, the location where it was collected, date, and your name in pencil in a corner or on the back of the dry paper. Slide the paper under the seaweed in the container.



STEP
3

Place several layers of blotting surface next to the seaweed bath. Gently lift out and move the seaweed on paper onto the blotting surface.



STEP
4



Spread the seaweed out nicely, using the pointed sticks and paint brush. Trim away any excess with the scissors.

STEP
5

Cover the seaweed with the weed-block material (which we have suggested because seaweed does not readily stick to it). Replace the newspaper underneath with around four fresh and dry pieces, and put more sheets of newspaper above the weed-block protected specimen. You can prepare a stack of five or six specimens in this way.

STEP
6



Place your stack of specimens between two boards to press. Smooth, clean, dry, non-staining unsealed wooden boards are best as they allow the moisture to escape and the specimens to dry and be pressed evenly. Place weights, for example a pile of books, on top of the boards.

STEP
7

Leave your specimens in a dry place for about a week, unwrapping the specimens carefully each day and replacing the damp newspaper with clean, dry newspaper for the first 3 days, or mould becomes a problem. The weed-block can be washed and dried out and re-used many times.



When they are fully dry, unwrap your specimens carefully. You can trim the mounting paper and, if necessary, use a little pva glue to fix any errant fronds (often the thicker bits of the specimen). You can use a pointed wooden stick to spread just enough glue.

STEP
8

SEAWEED CRAFTING IDEAS

Once your specimens are dry you can frame them or use them to make greeting cards. Some of the more robust seaweeds such as Carrageen Moss, Pepper Dulse and small Wracks, can be pressed flat and dried between sheets of weed-block material, and not attached to paper. You then have versatile seaweed elements which can be pasted onto painted paper, or used in collages, découpage, scrapbooks, or other craft projects.



Pressing seaweeds keeps them dry, if they are not treated roughly, they can last very well.

Some of the seaweeds gathered by Ellen Hutchins more than two centuries ago are still remarkable herbarium specimens, both useful and lovely.

**Ellen
Hutchins**
Publications

Text and photographs: Frances Gallagher © 2022 Cover photograph: Deirdre Fitzgerald
Produced by: Ellen Hutchins Festival, Bantry, Co Cork, October 2022 21) www.ellenhutchins.com
Funded by: County Cork Heritage Grant Scheme and Local Fisheries Action Group South

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council

