



## The Royal Society of Arts and Sciences of Mauritius

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*On the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the death of botanist Philibert Commerson, the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences of Mauritius invites you to start your own herbarium at home.*

A herbarium is a collection of dried plants that are kept flattened between sheets of paper. Each plant is called by its scientific name and its common name (or vernacular name). The herbarium is a catalog of the diversity of plants on earth. It serves to identify them and preserve their “memory”.

Two PhD students from the University of Mauritius, **Ashmi Bunsy** and **Geetika Bhandra**, are here to assist us in this creation. They propose two different methods.



### **Materials for Method 1:**

- Large heavy books (e.g. Old telephone books, heavy novels, etc)
- Tissue paper or plain paper
- Small pieces of bristol or thick paper for labels
- Pencil or pen
- Scissors for cutting samples of leaves
- A4 sheets of white bristol or thick paper
- PVA Glue or tape

**Président : Pierre de B. Baissac; Secrétaire : Jean-Michel Rouillard; Trésorier : Jean-Marie Huron.**

**Téléphone : 5983 8660 - Lundi et Mercredi (9h30 – 16h00) et samedi : (9h30 – 12h00)**

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## **Materials for Method 2:**

- A pile of old newspapers
- 2 sheets of cardboard the size of a newspaper page
- Heavy books or a belt
- Small pieces of bristol or thick paper for labels
- Pencil or pen
- Scissors for cutting samples of leaves
- A4 sheets of white bristol or thick paper
- PVA Glue or tape

Look carefully at the plants and trees around you, and see if you can identify the species which interest you. Research information about the plant in books, on the internet, or on phone applications such as Picture This, Plant In or Plant Net.



Make sure you have permission to take a sample before you proceed, and write down on the label:

- the common name of the plant (as you call it here)
- the scientific name of the plant after researching it
- the place where you are collecting the specimen
- the date
- your full name



When you cut the sample, include leaves, flowers, and seeds where possible. Once you have a specimen, you will need to start to dry it out thoroughly. Find a safe, sunny place on a shelf or table or in your car to leave your specimen for a few days/up to 2 weeks to dry. The amount of time will vary based on the plant you have selected. The area should have good air circulation to carry away moisture.

If using Method 1, place plant in the middle of a heavy book to see if it fits well. Spread the leaves and petals so the specimen is clearly visible, and place some leaves side up, and others side down. This will enable a very clear understanding of the plant afterwards.

Once you have the correct position, place several layers of tissue or plain paper on the book pages, place your plant well, place your information label next to the plant, and close the book carefully.

Place the book in your designated spot, and place more heavy books on top. Leave undisturbed.





After a few days, have a look at your specimen. If it feels very dry, then you're ready to mount the leaves on the white A4 paper/bristol. If not, repeat for another few days until ready.

If using Method 2, place one cardboard and then open some old newspapers over it. Put your specimen between the layers of newspaper. You can get a friend or a family member to help you. Spread the leaves and petals so the specimen is clearly visible, and place some leaves side up, and others side down. This will enable a very clear understanding of the plant later on.



Also place your information label on the paper, and close the newspaper. Add the second cardboard, and either put your heavy books on top, or tie both cardboards tightly together with a belt. The belt technique is very similar to the technique used by Commerson himself.







After a few days, have a look at your specimen. If it feels very dry then you're ready to mount the leaves on the white A4 paper/cardboard. If not, repeat for another few days until ready, like the following images. If you have dried many different specimens, tie the tag around them so you do not lose the identification.

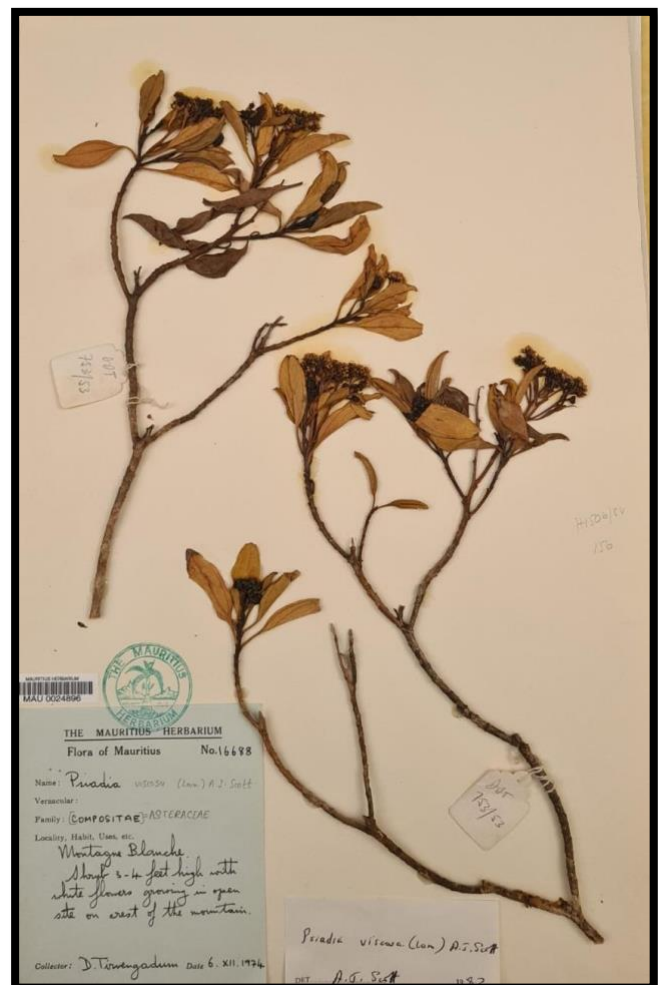




Once your specimen is very dry, you are ready to stick it to your A4 white cardboard or paper sheet. Use PVA glue or tape to attach the specimen to the sheet, carefully choosing how to position it so you can add your tag with the information on it. Usually these are placed in the bottom-right corner of the sheet. You may add a Description section, e.g. Dark green leaves, bright red flowers. Many flower heads per plant. Growing from top of stone wall.

Once the glue is dry, your plant will last for many, many years. Keep in file/folder and store in a place where they will stay cool, dry and flat.

Here are some pictures of specimens from the Mauritius Herbarium, courtesy of **Dr Claudia Baider**, Officer In Charge. The last one is from the Commerson collection, and is very old.





If you are proud of one of your mounted specimens in the format shown above, you may send it to us NOT LATER THAN 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023 on the following address:  
Royal Society of Arts and Sciences of Mauritius  
PO Box 55, Curepipe

**Make sure to include your name, responsible party/guardian name, and contact details.** We will do our best to include it in our exhibits during the upcoming events around Commerson in May 2023. We will contact you once we have received your specimen.

Have fun learning about the different species of plants around you and creating your own herbarium!

*Our sincere thanks to Dr Claudia Baider, and UOM students Ashmi Bunsy and Geetika Banda, for their assistance in this project.*

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