



Sun Prints 2 Ways



Sun Prints with Construction Paper

Supplies Provided

Construction paper

Supplies From Home

Leaves, flowers, or other natural objects (flat shapes like leaves produce finer details)

Clear tape

A sunny window or outdoor space

Collect your chosen plants or objects.

Arrange them on the paper, pressing flat to get sharp edges.

Secure them with tape.

Place the paper on a sunny window (plants facing out) or outside, pinned down with stones or a glass sheet.

Leave in the sun for a few hours; in cloudy weather, it may take a couple of days.

Remove the tape and objects to reveal the faded silhouette.

The Science

A sun print is a type of photogram - an image made by placing an object directly onto a light sensitive surface.

The dyes used in construction paper give strong colors but are unstable in ultraviolet (UV) light. The paper will quickly fade if exposed to a strong source of UV light, such as the Sun.

Plants are good specimens to capture with the photogram process, as they can be pressed flat but still keep many of their important details.



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Solar Paper Sun Prints

Supplies Provided

Solar (cyanotype) paper

Supplies From Home

Leaves, flowers, or other natural objects
Sunny outdoor space
Cardboard or towel
Optional--clear acrylic sheet

Find a place out of direct sunlight to arrange the foraged nature items on the sun print paper. When the print paper is in direct sunlight, or there is too much ambient light, it will expose the paper while you place the plants.

Arrange foraged items on the solar paper and make them as flat as possible.

To make the edges of the plants appear sharp when printed, use the clear acrylic sheet to press the plants flat so no sunlight seeps underneath the edges. You can skip this step if you want a softer line or blended contrast of the final blue and white print exposure.

The non-covered areas of the paper will turn from blue to white in about 2-5 minutes of sun exposure. If there isn't any direct sunlight, the print will still work. It will just take a little bit longer. Under cloud cover or non-direct sunlight, keep the print exposed for 5-20 minutes for it to fully fade to the desired contrast.

When the sun print is finished exposing and the non-covered areas are white, take everything off and dip the paper into the bucket of water.

After the water bath, the print will still take a little time to oxidize. The last step is to lay the wet print flat to dry. To avoid water spots showing, it helps to let the sun print dry on an absorbent surface like cardboard or a towel.



The Science

Cyanotype works because of a chemical reaction between two substances: light sensitive ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide. These chemicals are mixed together to form a solution that is spread onto a surface like paper or fabric.

When the treated paper is exposed to sunlight or a UV light, a chemical reaction happens. Ultra Violet (UV) rays trigger the reduction of the iron ions in ammonium iron citrate to iron ions. At the same time, the potassium ferricyanide is oxidized, forming ferrocyanide ions.

The oxidation of potassium ferricyanide produces a stable compound and pigment known as Prussian Blue. This blue color is what makes cyanotype art unique.