

# IN HER FOOTSTEPS: ACTIVITIES

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BY ANNA SOPER | 4TH WORLD CONGRESS  
OF PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY, 2021

## OVERVIEW

Who is Catharine McGill Crooks, and what happened to her specimen collection?

Born in 1833, in the Niagara region of Ontario, Canada, Kate Crooks joined the Botanical Society of Canada in 1861. Through a herbarium of 490 specimens, Crooks created a record of Ontario's plant life before industrialisation and urbanisation changed our landscape forever. Crooks collected native and introduced species, including some plants now lost in the wild in Ontario.

Sadly, Crooks is now unknown in Canada, and her collection does not appear to have survived the 150 years since her death. Only a published list of Crooks' specimens remains. Nonetheless, she is a compelling historical figure and deserves to be recognised as an early Canadian botanist and conservationist.

You can read more about Kate Crooks in my story for *Atlas Obscura*:

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/botanist-ontario-kate-crooks>



# DIY HERBARIUM

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## HISTORY

Botanists have produced herbaria (bound or loose collections of pressed botanical specimens) for centuries. These collections are not only appealing, they preserve valuable (and tangible) records of plant life from a given region.

In the 1860s, Kate Crooks made a herbarium of 490 plant species. Crooks' award-winning herbarium was exhibited at home and abroad, even gaining an honourable mention at the 1862 International Exhibition in London! Sadly, Crooks' collection is believed to be lost; however, one specimen attributed to a Miss Crooks is held at McGill University Herbarium in Montreal, Canada.

## METHOD

Make your own herbarium! You'll need some plant material, sheets of newspaper, a few heavy books or weights, and some cardstock.

### Beginner:

<https://carrefour.ca/en/blog/2020/06/11/cree-son-propre-herbier/>

### Advanced:

<https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/pubs/docs/wp/wp18.pdf>

LUPINUS PERENNIS FROM L'HERBIER LOUIS-MARIE (QFA),  
UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL, QUÉBEC, CANADA



# SUNPRINTING

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## HISTORY

As a trailblazing photographer and botanist, Anna Atkins established photography as a tool for scientific illustration. In fact, Atkins is considered to be the first person to publish a book illustrated primarily with photographs.

Through her father, a chemist, Atkins became friends with Sir John Herschel; the inventor of cyanotype photography.

Using Herschel's method, Atkins published the first volume of *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* in 1843. Only 17 copies of this work are known to exist today.

## METHOD

In traditional cyanotype photography, two chemicals (ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide) are mixed into a light-sensitive solution and brushed onto paper. Once dry, the paper can be exposed to sunlight and developed in a darkroom.

Pre-treated sunprint paper is a quick alternative to this historic process. This paper is available online and in art stores.



# THE BASICS

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## SUPPLIES

SUNPRINT PAPER

CLEAR ACRYLIC SHEET

CARDBOARD CUT TO SIZE

BINDER CLIPS

SMALL OBJECTS FOR PRINTING (FLOWERS WORK WELL!)

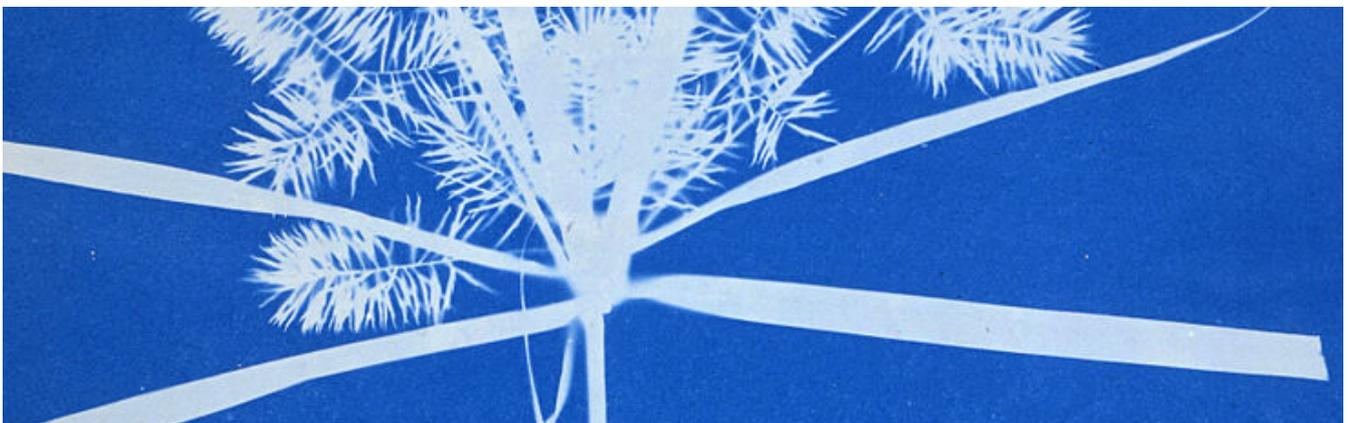
A BASIN OF WATER

## STEPS

In a shaded area, preferably indoors, place a sheet of sunprint paper on top of a clean piece of cardboard. Arrange your objects on the surface of the sunprint paper, then place an acrylic sheet on top. Put a few binder clips around the edges of the layered sheets. This will hold your items still during the exposure.

Bring your arrangement outside and expose it under full sun, following the directions on your pack of sunprint paper. Exposure time varies, but typically lasts 2 to 5 minutes.

Once exposed, head back inside to remove the acrylic, the cardboard, and your objects from the sunprint paper. Wash the sunprint paper in water for a few minutes and leave on a flat, clean surface to dry.



# NEXT STEPS

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## PLAY, SHARE, REPEAT

I would love to see your experiments with pressed flowers and sunprinting! Please share your work on social media, using the hashtag **#4WCOP21**.

Tag me on Twitter **@Flora150Project!**

And feel free to reach me through my website, [www.annasoper.ca](http://www.annasoper.ca).

