

## Petal to the Metal

Don't direct your frustrations at your partner; direct them toward this flower-pounding art project that will teach you how to turn Mother Nature's gifts into floral prints. For inspiration, check out some of the works in our exhibition *Flores Mexicanas*.

### Materials:

- Fresh flowers and leaves
- Watercolor paper and/or 100% cotton fabric
- Wax paper or paper towels
- Hammer, rubber mallet, or rock
  - A tool with a wide, flat head is most effective.
- Yoga mat or towel
- Acrylic Finishing Spray (optional)
- Alum (for fabric only)



- Take a walk together in nature and collect a variety of botanical specimens (or go buy them at the store). Vibrant colors and flat petals work best for this activity.
- If you are using fabric, first run it through the washer and dryer. Dissolve 3 T. of alum in a large pot of hot water (about a quart). Soak the fabric for 15–30 minutes, and then remove it and allow it to dry.
- Place the paper or fabric on a steady, sturdy surface.
- Cut the stems and any chunky parts off your flowers and leave only the petals and leaves.
- Arrange a selection of your findings face down on the paper or fabric. You can tape down your design to keep the flowers and leaves in place.



- Cover your arrangement with a wax paper or paper towel overlay and tape down the edges.
- Firmly hold your materials in place and begin pounding with your hammer. Focus on the petals, not the stamens. You can peel back the paper overlay to check on your progress. You may find that you need to pound harder.
- When you're satisfied with the pigment transfer, peel up the paper overlay and remove the flowers. If some natural fibers are stuck to the surface, wait for them to dry and then just brush them off.
- If you used fabric, iron it on a low heat setting, dyed side down, between two paper towels. If you used paper, you can spray it with an acrylic sealer to permanently set the colors.
- For those who don't want the fun to stop, consider enhancing your print using colored pencils, framing it, or making a flower field guide.

