



Alternative Photography Summer School



Phytogram Guide

Make prints using chemistry, black and white film and sunlight



You will need

- Black and white film of any size
- Soda crystals
- Vitamin C powder or tablets
- Darkroom fixer or saline solution
- Masking tape
- Measuring jug
- Glass or metal mixing bowl
- Clip frame or old photo frame
- Freshly picked plants
- An empty bottle
- Apron
- Gloves

Optional

- Paintbrush and/or sponge
- Darkroom paper

Recipe source from Karel Doing's phytogram blog <https://phytogram.blog/recipe/>

Method

Although this process uses darkroom materials, no darkroom is needed and this entire process can be done in the light. Select the plants you wish to make prints with; leaves and flowers are good choices so long as they can be flattened under the clip frame glass. You can also use things like feathers or your own body to make prints! If you're using vitamin C tablets crush these into a powder to make it easier to dissolve.

In your bowl mix together:

2 teaspoons of soda crystals with **1 teaspoon** of vitamin C powder in **250ml** of tap water.

The solution can be kept in the fridge in an airtight container for further use up to around two weeks.

Once everything has fully dissolved get your film ready by placing it on the backing board of your clip frame with the emulsion side facing up. If you're using 35mm or 120mm film the masking tape can be useful for holding this down to the board to stop it from curling.



Making prints

Dip your plants, feathers or body parts into the solution. Let any excess solution drip off and place the items onto the film. If you're using plants and flat objects place the glass on top to flatten these against the film. If you're using your body parts, press them against the film for as long as you're able, about a minute will do. To ensure that you get a clearly defined print you can do this step outside in the sun, but a good exposure should happen in most lighting conditions.

You can also use darkroom paper in the same way to make prints like this.

Other options are to simply paint onto the film or darkroom paper with the solution and see what results you get. Ensure that the solution has dried on the film before you fix it.

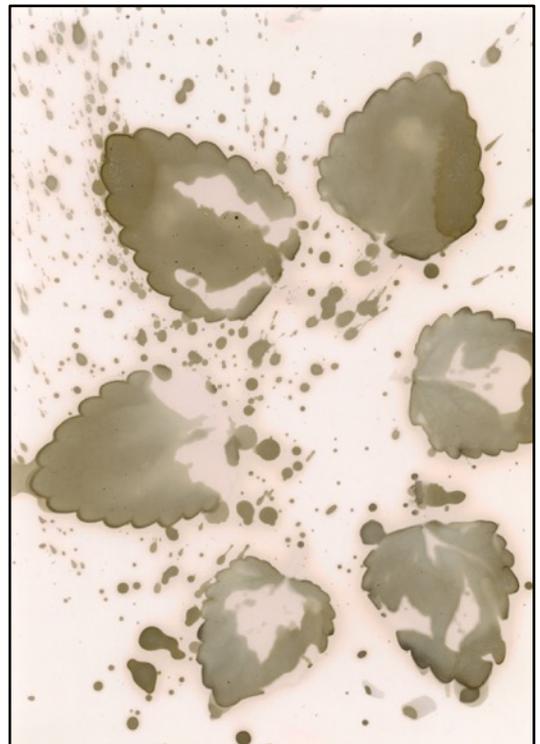
Fixing the image

After you've made your print it's important to fix the image. Make up the solution as per instructions on the bottle. Make sure your apron is on at this stage as fixer can stain your clothes, and use gloves to protect your skin.

Fully submerge your film into the solution. Leave this for roughly five minutes and return to check that the areas which weren't in contact with the phytogram mixture have gone transparent. If this hasn't happened yet then leave the film in the fixer for a minute more or until this has happened.

Once the film has fixed, pour the fixer into a spare bottle to keep for future use. Alternatively take this to your local darkroom or donate it to a friend that uses darkroom chemistry.

Fix needs to be recycled properly and not poured down the drain. If you're concerned about this, an alternative to fixer is a saline solution (roughly 5 tablespoons of table salt in 300ml of water) which will take longer to react, but should have the same effect.



Artists for inspiration:

Karel Doing: <https://kareldoing.net/>

Dan Herrera: www.instagram.com/danherrerastudio

Maria Magnusson: <https://mariamagnusson.tumblr.com/archive>

www.realphotographycompany.co.uk
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