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## Autumn Leaves for the Thanksgiving Table

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Autumn glow is so heartening, so amazing, that we walk beneath hard maples with a new erectness. And when their brilliant leaves begin to fall we walk as in a dream, not knowing where to look. Above us and around us and beneath our feet the world is ablaze with vivid reds and yellows.

We want to carry this dream with us; we want to continue to live in an ecstasy of color. So we pick up the loveliest of the fallen leaves; then others which seem lovelier. Farther on are brighter ones. When we reach home with a fistful of colored leaves the family, each in turn, says, "Aren't they beautiful!"

By the next day these leaves have begun to curl and to lose their glowing colors. How can you preserve them?

In our home we have experimented with hard maple (*Acer saccharum*) leaves only, so the information given here may not apply generally. And the methods suggested do not produce proper botanical specimens. But experiments are fun, so why not try these suggestions on maple leaves and others also.

(1) One successful method is to inclose the leaves singly between a fold of paraffined paper and press with a not-too-hot iron on both sides until the paraffin has melted onto the leaves. Remove them from the paper and let them dry. After a day or two they have wrinkled slightly but only enough to appear more natural than pressed leaves. The color remains reasonably true.

(2) The other method we have used is not new either. Several years ago I saw an interesting exhibit in Boston of dried garden flowers including sweet peas, snapdragons, roses, pansies, and others. These had been prepared by imbedding each spray in some

one of the common household powders for several weeks. The powder had been carefully sifted into each flower between its pistils, stamens, petals, and sepals and around the leaves. The powder aids in the drying. The specimens had been dusted off after weeks in the powder and were in many cases almost as true in color as the living flowers.

We tried this method this year with October maple leaves. On some we used talcum powder, some starch, others soda. The brand of talcum we used did not preserve the color well. The leaves had a soft muted rose tint.

Corn starch worked very well indeed, the vivid reds, maroons, and yellows being almost as good as if the leaves were just picked from the tree. And the leaves are nearly flat.

One of the most successful powders was baking soda. Again, the October reds and yellows were there after being imbedded four or five weeks in the soda. And weeks after being removed from the powder they retained their color and their flatness.

Autumn leaves are naturally far easier to preserve than spring leaves or frail flowers as much drying has gone on by fall. Sprinkle powder under and over each leaf. Place in a small box and set away uncovered (with some slight weight above), for four or five weeks. Later, when you remove the leaves and dust off the powder you find little undulations between the veins which are natural to fresh leaves, and a color difficult to retain in pressed leaves, no matter how carefully done.

Autumn leaves prepared in one of these ways and used to decorate your Thanksgiving table will cause your guests to exclaim, "How did you keep them!" This is both an exclamation and a question.