MAKERS MANUAL #33
AusBlau

WILDFLOWER BRICKS

INTRODUCTION

This DIY manual documents the production of wildflower bricks designed for planting wildflowers among materials that mimic their native surroundings. This manual is designed for people who want to turn urban greenery into a vibrant habitat for butterflies, beetles and bees. It is a little known fact that a great variety of native wildflowers thrive in low-nutrient soils. They prefer poor soil with a high chalk or limestone content. These unique wildflower bricks work as seed bombs that combine local wildflower seeds with a chalk mixture, solidified to make a sprouting brick. When the seeds inside the brick germinate, they find a portion of limestone around themselves to support their growth. The manual will guide users in the creation of brick-like shapes using materials found in the home. After the mixture dries, lay the bricks in the soil or into cracks in your garden wall and watch the wildflowers grow strong and tall. This is an ideal activity for the first weeks of spring.

LIST OF THINGS

MATERIALS
– Calcium Carbonate (also called Lime dust or Limestone flour)
– Xanthan Gum
– Tap water
– Food colouring, natural dye
– Wildflower seeds, corresponding to the local ecosystem

TOOLS
– Bowl (for mixing)
– Spatula (metal)
– Scale

FOR THE MOULD
– Tape
– High gloss thick-coated cardboard (cereal box, toothpaste box etc)

BIO OF THE DESIGNERS

Christoph Dichmann and Elissa Brunato are two London-based designers with a background in Material Futures. Together they founded AusBlau, a creative design studio that leads playful investigations into materiality, ecosystems, and the human experience. Combining Christoph's Contextual Design approach and the Material and Research expertise of Elissa, their joint practice explores material system challenges. They draw up interdisciplinary road maps towards sustainable normalities and imagine resilient futures to inspire an active engagement with our rapidly changing world.

FURTHER READING
– UK Butterfly Conservation have great gardening tips: https://butterfly-conservation.org
– Chalk dust is biodiversity gold dust: https://public.dorothy-stringer.co.uk/ds/Eco_Documents/A%20decade%20of%20habitat%20restoration.pdf

Makers Manual is a collaborative project between exciting makers and STORE STORE. This is a collection of manuals encouraging people to make objects from what is around them. These manuals are both a practical guide to making for beginners and experts, and a journey into the designers' practice. You can share your creations using #makersmanual.

This project is supported by G.F Smith.

STORE STORE
www.storeprojects.org
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STEP 1

Identify which butterflies, beetles or bugs are native to your area and which plants usually host them. You can visit the Butterfly Conservation website for this. Acquire the seeds of these plants.

STEP 2

To make the bricks, first, prepare the binder. For this, you mix Xanthan gum with water at a ratio 1g:45ml.

2

STEP 3

Leave this mixture to sit so that it combines well, then mix again. The binder resulting from 1g Xanthan would be enough for around 30 bricks.

3

STEP 4

For one brick, weigh up to 110g Calcium Carbonate, add around 1g (a pinch, or the tip of a knife) of the previously mixed binder and 17ml water, mix these ingredients thoroughly.

4

STEP 5

Mix in the wildflower seeds. Use one type of seed per brick and not too many seeds; try around 6-12.

5

STEP 6

Use natural food colour to colour-code your brick to match the flower colour for later recognition.

6

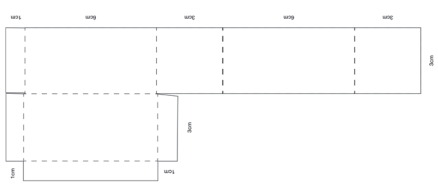
STEP 7

Search in your paper waste for high gloss coated cardboard pieces. These will make the ideal walls of a smooth non-stick mould.

7

STEP 8

Use the template on th back of this guide to cut out the mould.



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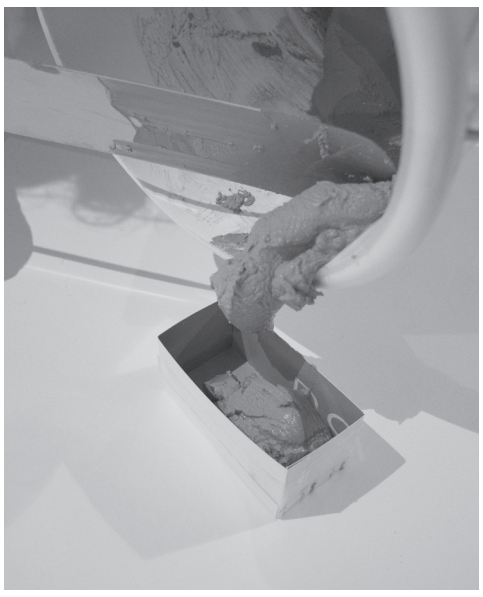
STEP 10

Pour the coloured calcium seed mix into the mould. Allow to dry in a warm area; you could also use the oven at a low temperature.



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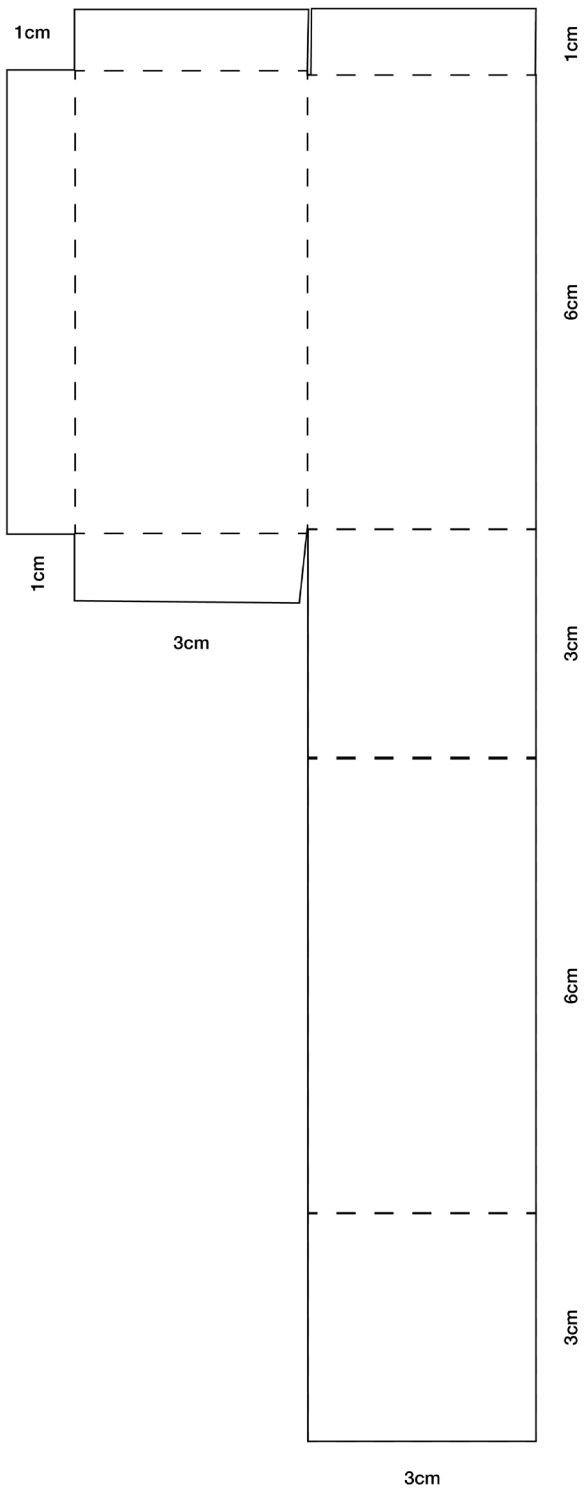
STEP 11

When the brick mixture has hardened, lay the bricks in the garden under a thin layer of soil, and water thoroughly.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