

Magic flowers

In spring, flowers appear in the garden, in parks and everywhere around us. One after the other, many different flower buds open up and beautiful petals unfold. This takes quite a while – it depends on the type of flower, the size of the buds, how much sunlight it gets and a number of other factors. Most flowers also close at night and open again as the sun comes out in the morning.



For many, bluebells are a sign that spring is here in Ireland. They open their beautiful blossoms in April/May each year. How many different stages from bud to full blossom can you see in these pictures? Photos: Cordula Weiss

If you don't want to wait until early morning to watch a flower unfold its petals here is a way to make your own flower at home and watch it unfold in seconds!

What you need

Paper (use coloured paper if you have some)

Scissors

Pencil

Bowl with water

Optional: coloured markers, googly eyes

What to do

1. Draw a flower with four or five petals onto a sheet of paper and cut it out.
2. Fold the petals towards the centre of the flower so that the tips meet in the centre.
3. If you like, draw a bee, butterfly or beetle onto a sheet of paper and cut it out too. You can give your insect googly eyes if you have some at hand or draw some eyes and pattern onto its back.
4. Open the petals of your flower and put the insect inside it. Then fold the petals over the insect so that it is hidden.

5. Pour some water into the bowl and place the flower on the surface of the water.
6. Wait and observe.

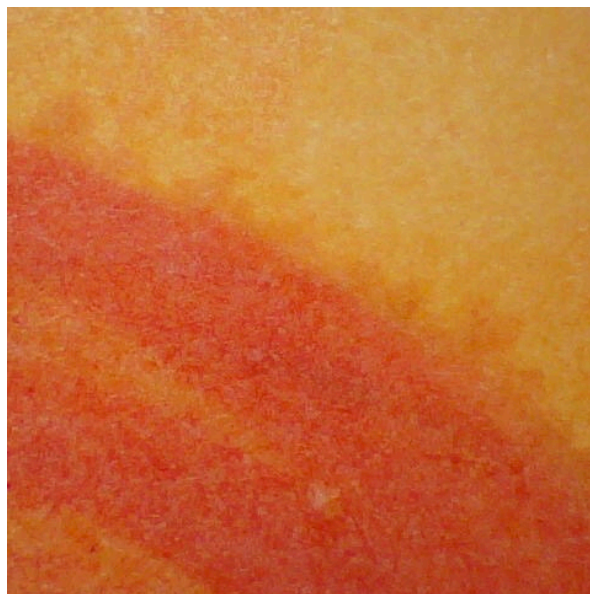
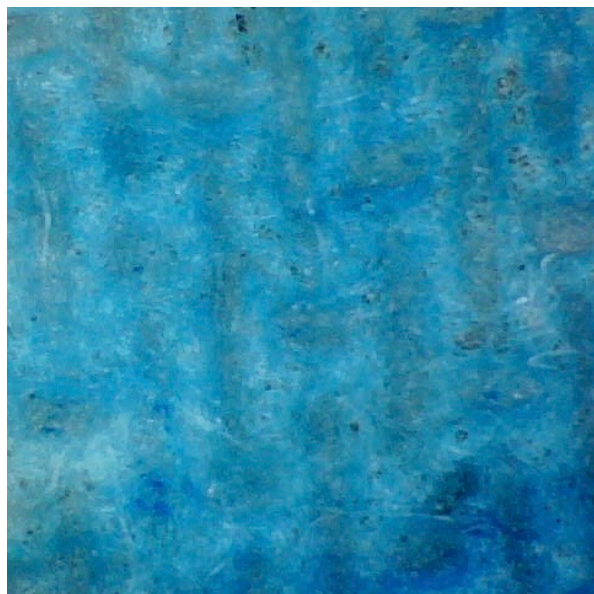


Cut a flower out of (coloured) paper and fold the petals so that they meet in the centre. If you like, hide a paper beetle, butterfly or bee inside. Place the closed flower into a bowl of water so that it swims on the surface.

How it works

Paper is a material that is made up of thousands of fibres. These fibres soak up liquid such as water and as they do so, they swell. This causes the paper to expand – and the flower opens up!

If you have different kinds of paper see if you can observe a difference. Does one kind open up faster than another? What other differences do you notice between these kind of paper? Is one kind of paper maybe softer and thicker than another one? How smooth does the surface of the paper feel? How easy is it to rip apart?



Different kinds of paper. The one on the left has a much rougher surface and thicker fibres than the one on the right.