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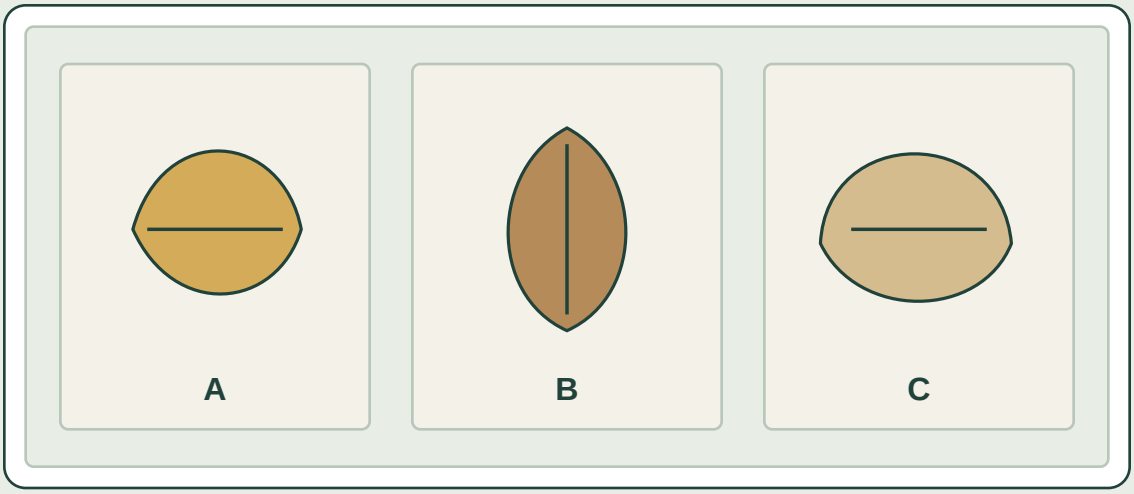
MAKE / BOTANICAL & NATURAL-MATERIAL CRAFTS

Use Dried Seed Pods in a Non-Food Decoration



KNOWN EMPTY PODS / NON-FOOD DISPLAY

14 practical steps · Identify · contain · display

Original diagrams and two printable maker records

Illustrative plans — not physical test results

FREE GUIDE + PRINTABLES | STP-MAKE-F120

Before you start

Dried seed pods offer striking forms, from elongated cases to rounded shells. A good craft arrangement begins by knowing what the material is and whether it is appropriate to bring indoors. This project creates a small three-compartment display using dry, empty, identified craft pods from a responsible local supplier or known permitted source. The pods remain removable, separated from one another and clearly labelled as non-food decorations. Do not use unidentified pods, loose seeds, toxic or irritating plants, or material that could spread pests or invasive plants.

Materials: three sound dry empty pods of known suitable species, a shallow rigid lidded display box or tray with a purpose-made clear cover, firm dry cardstock, pencil, ruler, adult scissors, and compatible labelled paper-craft adhesive for divider assembly if needed. Use a clean lined work tray and separate paper labels. Choose lightweight forms that fit completely below the cover and do not resemble food in presentation. Keep away from food preparation, children, pets, humidity and heat. This is not a drying, sterilisation, seed-propagation or preservation-treatment protocol.

Plan the project

For a worked example, choose a box with an internal floor approximately 180 by 100 mm and enough internal depth for the pods. Three removable paper cards, each 56 by 90 mm, arranged side by side with two 3 mm gaps, occupy 174 mm of width and leave 3 mm side margins. The 90 mm height leaves 5 mm at top and bottom. These are floor-plan dimensions: measure the actual clear interior including hinges and lips before cutting. Choose pods that rest entirely on their own card, with room to lift them without squeezing.

Use a non-food display format: a small descriptive label on each card, no food bowl, potpourri, scent additive or decorative edible claim. The cover must close without contacting the pods or trapping residual moisture. A closed box is not a way to dry material and is not automatically child-resistant. Choose verified dry empty pods and inspect periodically for changes. Unknown seeds or suspicious pest activity mean HOLD or exclusion; never deliberately release, plant, compost or transport unidentified seed-bearing material.

Steps 01–02

1. Define a non-food display and a safe source

Choose a small indoor display of dry plant forms, not a serving arrangement or play object. Buy known, empty craft pods from a responsible local supplier when possible. If collecting, verify that the source permits removal and the species is familiar and suitable; Parks Canada prohibits removal of natural objects from protected places. Avoid collecting seed-bearing invasive material or moving plant material across regional boundaries without checking relevant rules. Record supplier or permission and date.

2. Identify each specimen before bringing it into the work area

Record the actual known plant identity from the supplier or reliable local identification. If a pod is unknown, exclude it; do not guess from colour or shape alone. Avoid species known to be toxic or irritating and any unknown ornamental seeds. Ask a knowledgeable local source if identification is uncertain. Keep the three accepted specimens separate from food and household items. A label from an unknown mixed craft bag does not establish the identity of every pod.

Steps 03–04

3. Confirm that pods are empty, dry and intact

Inspect visually in a contained lined tray. Choose pods that have already been emptied through an appropriate supplier process and are completely dry, not ones that must be crushed or opened in the home. Do not shake, cut, pry or extract seeds from unknown pods. Exclude material with loose contents, dampness, visible mould, webbing, insect activity or brittle fragments. No washing, heat treatment, chemical spraying or pest eradication is part of this project.

4. Measure the inside of the actual display box

Measure clear floor width, front-to-back dimension and usable depth beneath the closed cover, taking hinges and lips into account. The worked example uses a 180 by 100 mm floor; your container may differ. Measure each pod’s resting height without squeezing it. Allow comfortable clearance from the cover, dividers and neighbouring pods. If any pod touches the cover or is too large to remove easily, choose a different box or specimen. Avoid thin or damaged glazing.

Steps 05–06

5. Cut three removable display cards

On firm dry cardstock draw three rectangles of 56 by 90 mm for the example. Cut with suitable scissors or use a pre-cut card of equivalent size. Place the cards on the box floor with 3 mm between neighbouring cards and approximately 3 mm at each side. Recalculate for the actual dimensions; a loose fit permits removal. Avoid forcing tight cards beneath the box lip. Mark positions A, B and C on the back and leave a strip for identification.

6. Make a loose layout in the compartments

Lay the cards out beside the box. Put one pod on each, choosing an orientation that rests without rolling. Compare the three silhouettes and leave a visible clear gap between forms. Sketch or photograph the arrangement. If a pod rolls readily, choose a more stable one or use a shallow purpose-made removable support that fits the box; do not wedge it between brittle objects. Keep the pods removable so they can be inspected individually.

Steps 07–08

7. Add optional paper partitions without contacting the pods

If the box has no existing compartments, place low removable folded card dividers in the gaps or use the box’s supplied partitions. A simple fold can stand between neighbouring cards; use compatible labelled paper adhesive only for paper-to-paper assembly when needed. Ensure the divider does not press on any pod or interfere with the lid. Let adhesive cure completely outside the display box. Do not glue plant material to a divider or use a tight seal to trap an uncertain specimen.

8. Label the specimens clearly

Write the known name or supplier identification, source date and NON-FOOD DECORATION on a small paper label or the lower area of each card. Do not include an edible claim, medicinal use, seed count or species name you cannot substantiate. If an identification becomes uncertain, remove that specimen. Use a consistent simple label format so a future replacement can be traced. Do not use a food jar or serving bowl to display the pods.

Steps 09–10

9. Inspect the cover and the storage location

Check that the manufactured box cover is sound and that no hinge or edge can crush the pods. Choose a dry room with a stable shelf or table, away from direct sun, heat, cooking surfaces and children or pets. A clear cover protects against accidental contact and dust but does not guarantee containment or prevent moisture problems. Do not display where the box could easily be knocked over or where the contents could be mistaken for food.

10. Install the cards and dry pods

Once all paper parts are dry and cured, place the three cards in the box in recorded order. Support each pod while positioning it on the correct card. Leave all gaps clear and keep any brittle stems from touching the cover or neighbouring specimen. If a form does not rest securely, remove it rather than forcing the lid to hold it down. Set aside any shed pieces in a contained reject area and record which specimen produced them.

Steps 11–12

11. Close the cover only after checking dryness

Verify that all contents and paper components are dry and visually sound. Close the cover according to its maker, observing from the side that none of the pods is compressed. Never use a closed display as a drying chamber. If you are uncertain about dryness, leave the specimen out of the finished box until appropriately assessed or replace it. Moisture trapped in a closed display can damage paper and organic matter.

12. Perform a limited visual inspection

Observe the entire arrangement while the box rests flat. Check for stable resting orientation, clear labels, unobstructed closure, loose material or visible dampness. Do not shake, tip or drop the box to test the pods. If a specimen shifts in ordinary supported handling, choose a different support or remove it. The inspection is not a test of toxin content, sterility, pest freedom or durability. Record actual observations and any unresolved condition.

Steps 13–14

13. Care for the display without dispersing contents

Keep the box in a dry inaccessible location and review periodically. If condensation, visible mould, insects or unexpected loose seeds appear, isolate the affected material without opening or shaking it in the living area; consult appropriate local disposal or pest guidance. Do not plant or compost unidentified seeds. Avoid spraying fragrances or chemicals on the pods, and do not place the display near a candle. Replace damaged paper or unsuitable specimens.

14. Document the completed arrangement

Complete Record 2 with each known pod ID, actual source, dimensions, card position, cover clearance and observations. Mark DISPLAY READY, CHANGE/REMAKE or HOLD. Record which components remain unverified and any follow-up action. Keep the identification record with the box. If gifting to another adult, include the non-food description and care note. No completed worksheet establishes absence of toxins, pests or other hazards; the design remains a limited decorative exercise.

Fix, care and preserve

Unknown pod identity. Remove the specimen; use a documented empty craft pod instead.

Loose seeds or insect activity. Isolate without dispersing; obtain appropriate local guidance.

Lid touches a specimen. Choose a deeper box or lower pod; never compress it.

Moisture develops. Do not seal the display. Isolate affected contents and replace unsuitable material.

Pod rolls. Use a stable shape or removable compatible support; keep the cover clear.

Source & evidence boundary

Original Steadleaf English prose, calculations, vector artwork, diagrams and maker records. The following sources provide factual context, not certification of this design. Follow actual component instructions and local collection, disposal and plant-movement rules.

Parks Canada, Visitor guidelines
https://parks.canada.ca/voyage-travel/regles-rules

University of Florida IFAS Extension, Drying and Preserving Plant Materials for Decorative Uses
https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP004

Purdue Extension, Preserving Plant Materials
https://ag.purdue.edu/department/hla/extension/extension-publications-library/ext-pubs/ho-102-w.html

Canadian Conservation Institute, Caring for paper objects
https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/preventive-conservation/guidelines-collections/paper-objects.html

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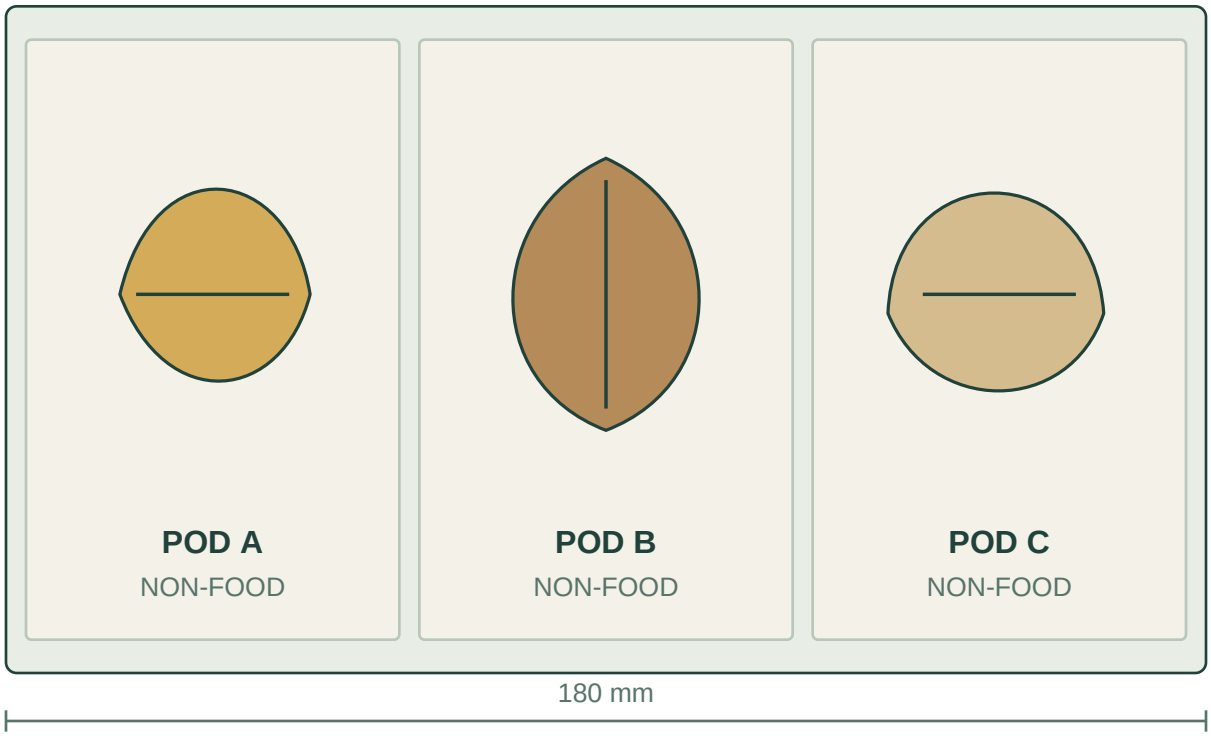
Three-card display floor plan

A 180 x 100 mm clear interior, three 56 x 90 mm cards, two 3 mm gaps and 3 mm side margins. Each card holds one known dry empty pod; actual cover depth must be checked.

A / EXAMPLE CLEAR INTERIOR: 180 x 100 mm



56 mm + 3 mm + 56 mm + 3 mm + 56 mm = 174 mm

3 mm side margins · 5 mm top and bottom · cards 90 mm deep

B / SIDE CLEARANCE



Source and containment decision

A three-stage identification, dryness and containment check. Unknown identity, loose seeds, dampness or pests lead to exclusion/HOLD, not a claim of safety.

A / SOURCE AND CONDITION DECISION



Never deliberately release or plant unknown seeds; follow local disposal guidance.

Specimen source and fit

Enter actual observations only. Mark missing information UNKNOWN or NOT CHECKED. This is a craft record, not a safety or preservation certificate.

Pod A / known name or supplier ID / source

Pod B / known name or supplier ID / source

Pod C / known name or supplier ID / source

Permission or purchase record / date

Empty, dry and sound? / observations

Box internal width, depth and usable height

Card sizes / pod resting heights / lid clearance

Decision: PROCEED / CHANGE / HOLD

Final non-food display

Enter actual observations only. Mark missing information UNKNOWN or NOT CHECKED. This is a craft record, not a safety or preservation certificate.

Positions A / B / C and label text

Actual divider / support / cure status

Cover closes without touching contents?

Any loose material, moisture or damage?

Display location away from food / heat / access

Disposition: DISPLAY READY / CHANGE-REMAKE / HOLD

Care and review trigger / local disposal issue

Date / reason