

Make a Paper Marigold

El Día de los Muertos, "Day of the Dead"

The vibrant, colorful, and historic "Day of the Dead" festivals in Mexico, Guatemala, and the American Southwest have their roots in ancient Aztec traditions. Meant to be a time to remember the dead as well as to honor the continuity of life, the community celebrations that occur during the first two days of November as part of the Day of the Dead holiday, are social and festive. Consisting of visits to the graves of loved ones, telling stories about the ancestors, preparing favorite foods, dancing, poetry, and the creation of elaborately decorated altars, these celebrations look humorously upon death and warmly welcome visits from the spirits of the departed.

Marigolds are the "flowers of the dead." Marigolds are used along with the magenta *mano de leon* (cockscorn flowers) to decorate altars. Their scent and bright colors are supposed to help the deceased find their way to the altar or *ofrenda* prepared for them. *Cempasuchil* is the word for marigold in Nahuatl (the indigenous dialect in Oaxaca, Mexico, at the time of the Spanish Conquest).



Marigolds adorn an altar in Oaxaca.
Photo by Natasha Dworkin

Step One:

Take one sheet of tissue paper.
Fold the tissue paper in half, so that the longest side is in half and the two short ends meet.
Fold in half again, in the same way.

Step Two:

Turn your rectangle so that one short end is closest to you.
Make a paper fan (or accordion) by folding the short end in strips of 1/2 to 1 inch wide.
Turn your paper over and fold again, making another 1/2 inch fold.
Turn your paper over again, making another fold the same size.
Continue turning and folding until all your tissue paper is folded into an accordion (all together).

Step Three:

Wrap your pipe cleaner around the middle of your tissue paper accordion.
Twist it together like a twisty-tie, leaving a little stem.
Cut the ends of the tissue paper on each side of your paper accordion.

Step Four: Pulling up your Flower

Pull out your accordion until it forms a circle.
Pull up the first layer of tissue paper toward the center of your accordion, all the way around the circle.
Pull up the next layer of tissue paper the same way, toward your first layer.
Pull up the next two layers of tissue paper toward the first two, smoothing the last layer up if you need to.
Your paper flower is finished!



To reserve a Day of the Dead kit, call the Burke Education Office at (206) 543-5591 Monday–Friday, 9 am – 5 pm. It includes artifacts, several craft samples, a video, maps, posters, books, recipes, and classroom activity ideas in a comprehensive teacher packet for one of Mexico's most important festivals.