

Rugged Field Press with Backpack Straps

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This heavy nylon field press measures 20 by 13 inches, with a 6-inch thickness for collected plants. It opens out flat for use in the field. It has handles of nylon webbing. In addition there is a set of buckled straps that can strap the bundle shut, or alternatively, can serve as shoulder straps for carrying the press.

Materials

1¼ yards Cordura (heavyweight coated nylon), 60" wide
 2 yards Velcro (hook-and-loop fastener), 1½" wide
 9 yards nylon webbing, 1½" wide
 2 buckles to fit webbing
 heavy-duty sewing thread and suitable needles
 masking tape for assembly

Tip: suggested source for these materials is an upholstery materials supplier. Or ask at a camping equipment store for a referral to a person who makes or repairs camping gear.

Overlapping Velcro-fastened flaps hold all straps out of the way when not in use. A two-compartment outer pocket with separate flaps is big enough to hold a standard waterproof field notebook and collecting tools. Two full-width inner pockets hold 12x18" stiffening boards, and can also carry pressing materials.

Velcro-fastened inner flaps on both sides of the opened press hold the pressed plants.



Pieces

Pieces	Cut size	Finish size
1 Outer Cover	21 x 42	20 x 40
2 Inner Pockets	21 x 15	19 x 13
4 Inner Strap Flaps	8½ x 12	7 x 10 (angled at corners)
2 Strap Guards	5 x 15	3½ x 14
1 Tool/book Pocket	9 x 21	8 x 14 (pleated and sewn)
2 Tool Pocket Flaps	7 and 11 x 5	5½ and 9½ x 3½
1 Spine Reinforcement—scrap will do		7 x 21 (less will do)

Finishing details for added durability

- All edges are cut with a 1-inch allowance, and are finished with a rolled and double-stitched edging.
- Edges subject to abrasion are bound with folded nylon webbing. Particularly important are the edges of the outer cover at the spine—the space between the two inner pockets which will be the base of the loaded press.
- The pull edges of all flaps that are closed with Velcro have a wide, easily grabbable seam allowance which overlaps the edge of the Velcro and is sewn down onto it.



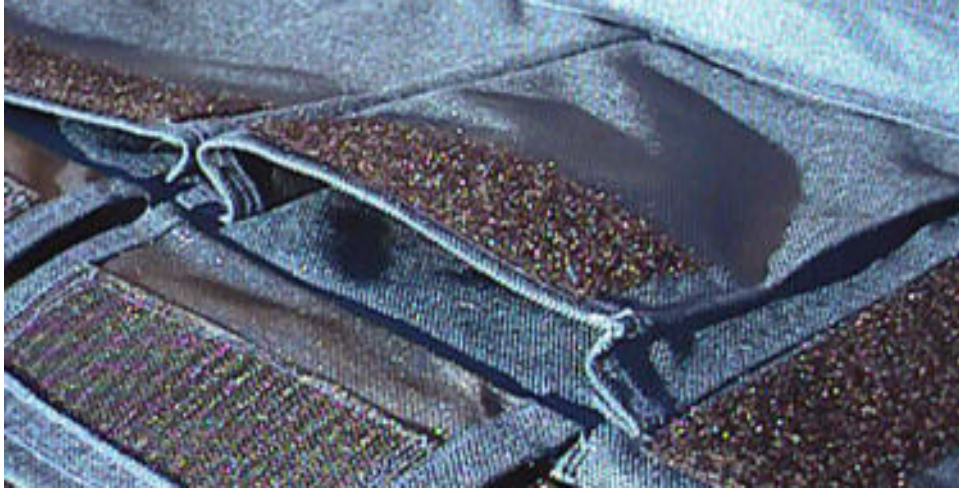
- Any Velcro straps that will be pulled from the ends have pull tabs of nylon webbing, again overlapping the Velcro and sewn down.
- Wherever nylon webbing is sewn to the nylon fabric, or Velcro to fabric or webbing, stitch lengthwise in multiple rows. Webbing, may be reinforced with a square of stitching crossed with an X at the ends.
- The reinforcement panel added to the inside of the spine of the cover is crisscrossed with stitching to hold it in place.

Assembly

The general plan of attack is to sew on the pockets and straps that are on the outside of the cover, then the pockets and flaps on the inside. Finish the edges and attach the inner plant straps. **Tip:** Pieces can be held in place with masking tape until they're sewn.

- ◇ Draw chalk lines across the nylon side (right side) and the coated side (wrong side) of the outer cover, at 13" (front cover), 6" (spine), and 13" (back cover) from one end. The remaining end will be the cover flap.
- ◇ Roll and sew down the edge of the cover flap with two rows of stitching
- ◇ Sew the back handle (nylon webbing, minimum length 27") to back of the outer cover. The ends of the webbing should be in a spot that will be covered by the backpack straps, and the handle opening should be about six or eight inches wide. The loop is better too long than too short—it will need to accommodate the width of the collected plants. The end points of the sewn-down portions should be firmly sewn at the top of the back cover, with a square and X for strength.
- ◇ Sew the front handle webbing strap (minimum length about 37") firmly to the lower edge of front cover, folding ends under. Place them about 14" apart, to accommodate the width of the strap guards. The handle strap should be long enough to reach as far above the edge of the front cover as the back handle reaches above the top of the back cover.

- ◇ Make and sew on the lower strap guard. Roll and double-stitch the ends and the upper edge. Sew a strip of Velcro to the right side 1" from the upper edge. Place it right sides together against the spine, with the seam line on the line dividing the front cover from the spine. Sew along this line, trim seam to ¼", fold the flap toward the front cover and topstitch with two rows of stitching near the seam.



- ◇ Make and sew on the tool pocket. Roll under and stitch down the upper edge. Form a pleat by folding each end under 1½" from edge and stitching close to the fold. Decide the relative widths—totaling 14"—of the two sides of the pocket (5" and 9" chosen here, but this can be changed). Sew a piece of Velcro equal to the pocket width to the top of each of the two pockets, with one end at the edge with the stitched pleat. There will be a gap between the two pieces of Velcro. Align the pocket piece flat (don't fold the lower edge under) and stitch down with two rows of stitching about ½" apart between the two pockets. Fold the two sides of the pocket face-to-face and stitch together from the base to 1" from the top of the pocket, about ½" from where they are sewn down. (This forms a tube which can hold a pen or marker; see photo for construction detail.) Fold under the ends of the pockets and stitch down at a full width of 14" (directly above the ends of the strap guard). Form a pleat by folding the stitched fold against the sewn-down edge and pressing firmly. Tape in place until the lower edge can be stitched down along with the upper flap of the strap guard.
- ◇ Make the upper strap guard. Roll and double-stitch the ends. Sew the Velcro to the underside an inch or a little more from the edge. Fold the upper edge under and sew it down onto the edge of the Velcro. Place the flap, right sides together, against the tool pocket, with the seam edge aligned with the lower edge of the pocket. Sew it in place, then fold it down and topstitch the seam, at the same time finishing the bottom of the tool pocket.
- ◇ Make the tool pocket flaps and sew on the Velcro strips with sturdy pull edges as described in previous step. Sew the flaps into place, top-stitching the seam.
- ◇ Sew on the backpack straps. The webbing should be at least 2 yards long if they will be used as shoulder straps. The straps are sewn down to the cover at a distance of 11" apart, with the fixed end of the buckle aligned so that the whole buckle fits just below the edge of the back cover (next to the handle you've already sewn in place). The strap is stitched onto the cover, from the top edge the back cover to the edge of the spine where it meets the front cover.. Reinforce this point by sewing a square crossed with an X. Place the adjustable end of the buckle onto the strap and finish the end of the strap by rolling and stitching.
- ◇ Sew 8" Velcro strips on the front outside cover on each side of the tool pockets. Sew the other half of the Velcro onto the corresponding place on the wrong side of the cover flap. You're done with the outside cover!

- ◇ Make the spine reinforcement by placing a 7"-wide piece right side up along the spine. If using a scrap that doesn't reach to the edges, roll under and stitch down the ends first.
- ◇ Make and sew on the inner pockets. Roll and double stitch the upper edge. Place one pocket right sides together with the seam line along the line marking the spine. Stitch and fold up against the cover. This also sews down the spine reinforcement piece. Topstitch the seam. Do the same with the other pocket on the other half of the cover.
- ◇ Make and sew on the plant strap flaps. Trim two corners off of one long edge of each of the four flaps and roll and sew down all edges except the other long edge. Align each of the four flaps, placing the unhemmed edge at the center of the side of each of the inner pockets. Stitch the sides of the inner pockets and the plant strap flaps one inch from the edge.
- ◇ Finish the edges. Trim the seams of the pockets and flaps to less than ½", roll the edge of the outer cover over the seam, and double-stitch it down. Reinforce any vulnerable edges by encasing with folded nylon webbing.
- ◇ Make plant straps by sewing 9" of Velcro 3" from the end of an 18" piece of webbing. Fold over the end, roll cut edge under, and sew to the edge of the Velcro, forming a grab tab at the open end of each strap. Sew these straps onto the flaps, with 4 inches of strap, end turned under, firmly sewn onto each flap. (The end of each finished strap will reach exactly to the opposite seam, and the Velcro will overlap by only 2 or 3 inches when the press is empty.)
- ◇ Sew webbing grab tabs onto the front cover flap at the ends of the Velcro strips.

Using the field press

Slide a 12" x 18" piece of sturdy cardboard or thin plywood into each of the inner pockets.



Additional cardboards and newspaper pressing material may be carried in the pockets or strapped into one of the plant flaps. Plants as collected are stacked in their newspapers and held with a sheet of cardboard under the plant flaps.

The press can be firmly strapped for carrying by buckling the buckles and pulling tight. For carrying as a backpack, the straps are crossed through the back handle and buckled into the buckle on the opposite side of the press. Any straps not in use can be folded and held out of the way by the strap flaps.