

FAMILY ACTIVITIES AT HOME

Super shiny flowers

Ages
6+

You will need:

- An unwanted CD or DVD
- Acrylic paint
- Paintbrush
- Something to scratch your design with – you could try using a pencil, a key or a toothpick.



Some flowers have a special property called iridescence. It makes them extra beautiful and helps bees find them. Read on to find out how to make your own iridescent scratch-art flower.



WHAT IS IRIDESCENCE?

If you've ever noticed the rainbow of colours on a CD or the feathers of a male peacock then you have been looking at something called iridescence.

Scientists have discovered that flowers can be iridescent too. Although flower iridescence isn't always super noticeable, bees can spot it and it helps guide them to flowers.

The secret behind flower iridescence lies in the surface of the petals. To our eyes they look flat and smooth, but powerful microscopes reveal a complex surface of ridges. Light interacts with these ridges so that the petals appear colourful.

TO MAKE YOUR OWN FLOWER SCRATCH ART:

1. Paint the shiny side of your CD all over with acrylic paint.
2. Wait until the paint is dry.
3. Scratch a flower design into the painted surface. Where you remove the paint the iridescent surface will show through. Take your time and don't rush.
4. Yay! You have finished your artwork. Decide where you want to display it. You could hang it in your garden as a bird scarer.



TOP TIPS:

- Make sure you use acrylic paint.
- Different colours of paint vary in how easy they are to scratch off so you might need to experiment a little to find a paint that works for you.
- Small intricate design patterns seem to work better than scratching off larger areas.

To find out more about iridescence and other amazing plant surfaces visit the new hands-on exhibition at Cambridge University Botanic Garden until the end of October 2020.

