Making Seaweed Bookmarks

"Seaweed" is the common name for species of algae that grow in the marine environment. Seaweeds are found in all oceans of the world. They occur in the sun-lit subtidal and intertidal areas along varied coastlines from tropics to arctic areas. **There are over 500 (and counting) species of seaweeds in Alaska!**

Seaweeds are important to nearshore ecosystems because they provide refuge for many invertebrates and fishes, and are a source of food and nutrients for many nearshore species. Thousands of edible seaweeds of various shapes and sizes occupy a wide array of ecological niches. The distribution of seaweeds worldwide and within regions depends on sea temperature, light availability, suitable attachment surfaces, nutrients, and wave action.

Today, scientists use seaweed pressings to travel back in time. Newly developed methods of extracting data from seaweed pressings, such as stable isotope analysis and DNA sequencing, allow scientists to measure the impacts of pollutants on coastal ecosystems, document changes in marine community structure, and create evolutionary trees for a wide variety of seaweed species.

Vocabulary
- bladder rack; rock weed; yellow seaweed (*Fucus spp.*): **tayeidí**
- black seaweed (*Pyropia abbottiae*): **laak̲'ásk**
- bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*): **sú**
- ribbon kelp (*Alaria marginata*): **geesh**
- ribbon seaweed (dulse, *Palmaria mollis*): **k̲'áach'**
- hairy grass seaweed on which herring spawn: **né**
- seaweed, kelp on which herring spawn: **daaw**
- half-dried, compressed food, esp. berries or seaweed: **kat'ák̲xi**

Materials
- Seaweed*
- Bucket of seawater
- 140 lb. watercolor paper
- Cardboard sized to cover your paper
- Weed cloth or other mesh fabric sized to cover your paper
- A medium-size artist's paintbrush
- Two pieces of wood sized to cover your paper
- Something heavy, such as books, to use as weights

*More translucent and delicate seaweeds make better (and less messy) prints.

Instructions

Step 1: Gather your specimens and then place them in a bucket filled with clean seawater.

Step 2: Fill another bucket with two inches of water. Then slide a piece of watercolor paper into the tub and arrange the seaweed on top, keeping both paper and seaweed submerged.

Step 3: Carefully lift the paper out of the water, tilting it this way and that so the water drains away but you still maintain your design (more or less). Using a small brush, reposition the seaweed into the desired composition and brush away any unwanted bits of seaweed and sand.

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Step 4: Carefully place your arrangement on a piece of corrugated cardboard and gently place a piece of mesh fabric on top. You can layer several prints this way.

Step 5: Place your stack of prints between the two flat boards and put something heavy on top, such as a brick or your Introduction to World Art books. Wait several days, depending on the relative dryness of your climate. A fan also helps.

Step 6: After several days, remove the weights and layers to reveal your prints. (If they're not fully dry, it's fine to put them back under the weight.) Write the names of the specimens in pencil.