

Nature Art Fact Sheet

1. Exploring your backyard can be exciting. When searching for natural items, make sure to choose items that are not in use. For example, instead of pulling a leaf off of a tree, try to find one that has fallen on the ground. Once you have your pile, you may see that you have items with many different shapes, textures, and colors. Even if you only collected sticks, you will find that each stick is unique. While you are drawing your chosen item(s), make sure to look closely at every detail. If it's a leaf, look for the veins, the shape of the stem, the color differences throughout the leaf, and if there are any rips or growths on the leaf. If you have one, a magnifier can give you a slightly different perspective.
2. Ephemeral means that something is not meant to last long. When using art to create nature, it's best to keep things temporary. A rabbit may come by and nibble on your creation after you've finished, and that's okay! If you want to keep your artwork, you can take a picture of it. We want to be sure to leave natural items outdoors where animals have access to them for food or shelter.
3. Nature stamps can be used to make really nice pictures and designs. Once you master the art of the nature stamp on paper, you can use them to decorate a tote bag, pillowcase, or even a shirt!
4. Nature rubbings can give you a similar impression as a nature stamp, but it's less messy. You can also do nature rubbings on larger items like tree trunks. You will notice that each item you do nature rubbings with will have their own design and texture. In fact, with some trees, you can identify the species based on the texture of the bark alone. For example, black walnut trees have distinct dark colored bark with deep ridges that often intersect creating a diamond pattern.
5. You can make your own "crayons" by using nature. When pushing a part of a plant into a piece of paper, you are transferring the pigment. Before we had synthetic dyes and colors, people used nature to create their dyes and pigments. You can do this too by collecting items of a specific color, chopping them, putting them in an airtight container with water, and then setting it in the sun for a few days. If you want a faster result, you can also boil the water and items for about an hour. You can test your dye out on a t-shirt or other piece of fabric. Plants, especially flowers, have varying colors for different reasons. For plants, bright colors often encourage pollinators to come closer. These pollinators like bees, butterflies, bats, and birds collect pollen from one plant and then distribute that pollen to other plants. This is how many plants reproduce.
6. Many animals can be considered architects. Beavers build dams and lodges, birds build nests, termites build towers, and bees build hives. They use built-in engineering skills to design their homes in ways that best serve them. For example, wasps build their nests with chambers for each individual egg. These chambers are hexagonal so they fit together, like in a honey comb. This design uses less space and actually makes the walls of the nest stronger.