

DIG ART!

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY
IN THE GARDEN



Visual Art : Blind Contour Drawing in the Garden Part 2

- Overview** This activity provides students with the opportunity to draw in a mode of complete concentration, so much so that they won't even look at their paper—the drawing is removed from the students' view as they create it. This is often troubling for students when they initially try it and they often react in protest saying things like "my drawing is going to be awful!" However, the point of this exercise is not what drawing students produce, rather it is to show them the concentration and focus necessary to draw plants from the garden, by "training" their eyes to fully take in the subject and connect directly to their drawing hand.
- Objectives** Students will:
- Practice contour drawings without looking at their paper (blind contour drawing)
- Time** 30-45 minutes
- Materials**
- desks or some other comfortable place to draw
 - plant subject for each student (a flower, veined leaf, piece of driftwood, collection of nuts or seeds, potted plant, etc.)
 - drawing paper
 - sharpened pencils
- Instructions**
1. Students will begin by taping a piece of paper to their drawing surface so it can't shift while they work.
 2. Next, students will place their chosen plant subject on a stool or table next to their drawing surface, or hold it in their non-drawing hand.
 3. Turning their chair so that they are completely facing the plant object, students will arrange their workspace so that their sketchbook and drawing hand are completely out of their peripheral vision. Remind them that they will never look at their drawing throughout this exercise.
 4. As they begin to draw, guide students by telling them to allow their eyes to move slowly along the surface of their subject, only a few centimeters at a time.

5. As their eyes move, so should their pencil (out of sight), drawing the line in coordination with their eye movement. If the edge of the object moves slightly upward, so should the direction of their line. Ask them to imagine that the pencil point is their eye, following it as their eyes move slowly.
6. Tell them they should allow themselves to get lost in the subject matter and forget what their drawing looks like.
7. Encourage students to continue drawing until every element of their subject has been drawn. At that time, they can turn back to their drawing. Maybe it will resemble the subject, but it likely will not, or the lines will have a different flavor.
8. Remind students that the idea with this exercise is to abandon thoughts of how the object *should look* in a drawing and focus on how the object *actually looks* from life.
9. Encourage students to try this again and again. It will sharpen observation skills and likely create a sense of calm as students become engrossed in the shapes of their subject.



Resources

Keeping a Nature Journal: Discover a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles Roth

The Art of Botanical Drawing by Agathe Ravet-Haevermans

The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain by Betty Edwards

A Handbook of Biological Illustration by Frances W. Zweifel

How to Draw Plants by Keith West