

DIG ART!

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY
IN THE GARDEN



Visual Art & Performance: Painting in the Garden

Overview Students will closely observe a plant in the garden and turn these observations in to beautifully detailed garden-based paintings.

Objectives Students will:

- further develop their observational skills of aesthetics such as form, pattern, color, and shadow
- foster an appreciation of the garden as a subject for art
- make connections between skills used by artists and scientists alike

Time 1 hour

Materials

- painting supplies such as paints, brushes, paper or canvas, smocks, etc.
- magnifying lenses
- clipboards or easels to hold paper while painting

Background Artists observe their subjects closely and are always refining their skills specific to aesthetics—form, pattern, color, and shadow. Gardeners often observe their gardens in order to monitor plant growth, pest management, and other biological or climatic changes. Painting in the garden can provide your students with unique ways of perceiving and interacting with their garden. Creating images of plants from the garden through painting can open your students up to the beautiful world of plants in new and complex ways.

Instructions

1. Guide students to improve and hone their observational skills by asking the following questions for the plant they will paint in the garden:
 - Is it small and delicate, or strong and firm?
 - Is its color flat or vibrant?
 - Is its texture smooth or rough?
 - Is the stem round, square, or flat?
 - Are the leaves full, toothed, or lobed?
 - Do the leaves grow opposite or alternate on the stem?
2. Students can use a magnifying lens to get in close and observe parts of the plant they didn't notice before, examining the incredible diversity of textures, colors, lines, shapes, and patterns.

3. Students can then practice using paint and brush in a variety of ways to capture the details of the plant. Let them know that while there are several techniques artists may use for this, there is no one right way and students should be encouraged to experiment with brush strokes, color, etc.
4. Students may wish to incorporate their drawing skills from previous lessons to first sketch out a pencil drawing that they will then fill in with painted details.

**Taking it
Further**

Have students paint their garden subject in different seasons or times of day. Students can paint a plant at different stages of its development and growth.

Resources

Beautiful Botanicals: Painting and Drawing Flowers and Plants by Bente Starcke King

Botanical Illustration in Watercolor by Eleanor Wunderlich

The Art of Botanical Painting by Margaret Stevens

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



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