

DIG ART!

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY
IN THE GARDEN



Printmaking: Painted Leaf Prints

- Overview** Students will create beautiful painted prints of leaves, flowers, and other objects found in the garden.
- Objectives** Students will:
- explore print making methods using leaves and other materials gathered from the garden
- Time** 1.5-2 hours
- Materials**
- tempera paint or printing ink (such as Speedball)
 - palettes (small plates or bowls to mix paint in)
 - brayers (for use with printing ink) or paint brushes (for use with tempera)
 - small containers with water
 - newspaper
 - masking tape to secure newspaper covering to work space
 - tweezers
 - paper
 - flat leaves
 - other materials gathered from the garden that may make interesting prints (twigs, mosses, rocks, etc.)
- Instructions**
1. Prepare a workspace by covering tables with newspaper, setting out tools, etc.
 2. With students, gather a diversity of leaves and other appropriate printing materials from the garden.
 3. Students will then begin by choosing a color of paint or printing ink that they would like to work with and putting a dab of it on their palette. Either material works well—it's fun to experiment with both. Rolling the brayer in the ink back and forth, students will cover the brayer evenly with a thin layer of ink. For the paint, a foam brush works well to paint the underside of the leaf (the one with the prominent veins).



4. Next, students will choose a leaf to print and roll the ink-covered brayer over the leaf/the paint-covered foam brush, evenly but thoroughly coating it with a thin layer of ink or paint.
5. Using tweezers to pick up the painted leaf, place it face down on a piece of paper.
6. Cover the leaf with a second piece of paper. Using a firm fist, press down on the leaf so that it makes a thorough, consistent print.
7. Follow these same steps again, with a few more leaves. Once students have the hang of it, encourage them to continue the printing process on their own, using different paint colors on the leaves and arrangements of the leaves on their paper. Sturdy leaves can make up to ten or twenty prints, so no more than a few leaves will be needed per person.



Taking it Further

These painted leaf prints make great journal decorations, and can be used in making harvest season garden calendars and thank you cards.

Try this activity with fruits and vegetables.

