

brush WITH NATURE

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Nature is full of complex curves, shapes, and lines: the sweep of a pine branch, a cascading waterfall, waves marching along a lake, or a rolling thunder cloud. To our eyes, the natural world may seem chaotic—a bold blend of colours, textures, and patterns. But a more careful look reveals just how intricate and lovely the shapes of nature are. Pick up a single leaf and admire the veining pattern, the scalloped edges, the various shades of green, and the shape of the stem. There is beauty in the very small. And in the very large. Sit atop a hill and watch the dipping and rising lines of the horizon, or the puffy shapes of clouds.

One way to tune into the wonder of nature and its many forms is to capture it through paint. By painting, we not only express ourselves, we also hone our observational skills, letting others know what it is that we see.

Nature-made paintbrushes

Go for walk and gather the following:

- » 8" long twigs
- » A selection of pliable dried materials, including:
 - » Cedar, pine, fir, hemlock, or spruce sprigs
 - » Fern tips
 - » Dried flowers
 - » Grasses
 - » Birch bark
 - » Leaves

1 To create your paint brushes, attach the dried material of your choice to the base of a twig by securing with an elastic band.

2 Use watercolours and experiment with the textures that each paint brush you created makes. (Hint: the tip of a feather produces a nice straight line, while cedar brushes create a mottled effect.)

Berry good ink

You can also make your own ink to paint with from berries found in nature (if you can't find any on your next walk, any berry in your fridge can work too!).

- 1 Collect berries. If they're frozen, let them thaw, then crush them into a pulp.
- 2 In a small saucepan, add a cup of crushed berries, 1 Tbsp vinegar, and a dash of salt. Let simmer for 45-60 mins.
- 3 Let cool and strain through a coffee filter or cheesecloth. Store in a jar with a tight-fitting lid.



Tea-riffic ink!

Ink can also be made from nuts, flowers, barks, and other natural materials to create a beautiful palette of colours! You can even make ink from tea! Simply brew 4 bags of black tea in one cup of boiling water, and let steep for 5 mins. While still warm, add cornstarch a bit of at a time until the tea is thickened to ink consistency. Strain and let cool, then add 1 Tbsp of vinegar.