

DIG ART!

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY
IN THE GARDEN



Visual Art : Using a Viewfinder Drawing in the Garden Part 1

Overview Drawing in the Garden activities Part 1-4 are designed to help guide students in observing the plant world. Part 1 is an introductory activity where students will do an initial practice composition using a viewfinder to help focus and look closely.

Objectives Students will:

- draw plants using a viewfinder to help them observe details closely.

Time 1 hour

Materials

- paper viewfinder (a note card or piece of paper with a hole cut out of the center)
- blank paper
- clipboards
- pencils



Instructions

1. Lead students on a walk through your school or neighborhood garden, the park, around the schoolyard, in the woods, or along a tree-lined street.
2. Guide them in focusing their attention on the shapes, sizes, patterns, textures, and groupings of the plant life. Even in winter, one can notice how the light falls on objects such as twigs and limbs unevenly, leaving some details in darkness and others fully illuminated. Encourage students to notice specific details such as the shapes produced by the shadows on overlapping leaves.
3. Next, have students find a group of plants, a single plant, or a part of a plant that is especially interesting to them. If it is very cold outside, they may want to position themselves near a window, out of which they can see plant details easily, or bring some plant parts indoors.
4. Using a viewfinder to focus their observations, students frame a composition. Show them how to move it closer and further from their eyes to get a close-up or wide-angle perspective. Closing one eye and viewing the object that way can also help students by inhibiting their depth perception and making the image appear more 2-dimensional, which will translate to paper more easily.

5. Students can spend 20 or more minutes observing and drawing what they see carefully. Encourage students to draw what they see in detail, rather than draw the symbolic representations of the plants from their minds. For example, your students all know what a leaf looks like and may stop looking at the leaf at hand and draw a leaf from memory. However, emphasize that this is about drawing this part of this one leaf on this day at this time. It's a leaf, or whatever else they may be drawing, like they have never seen before.

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-Haeevermans

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