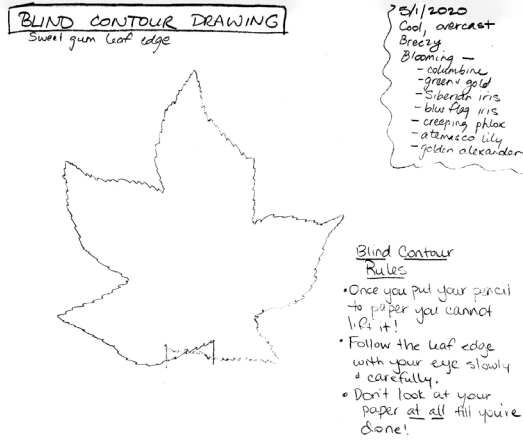


Sitting quietly in nature and observing the life and patterns going on around you can be a relaxing experience. Recording your feelings, thoughts and observations in a Nature Journal will help you reflect on the experience and can set the stage for future observations and reflections.

Leaf Drawing



Blind Contour Drawing

Drawing without looking at the paper may feel strange at first, but is a very helpful tool to improve your observation and drawing skills. Because you are forced to look at the object you are drawing, and not the drawing itself, it helps you draw what you observe, rather than a symbol that represents it. Blind contour drawing also can help improve hand-eye coordination and with practice, your hand will learn to follow your eyes.

When you look at your blind contour drawing, don't expect your drawing to look exactly like the leaf! You most likely won't stop drawing in the same place that you started. However, it should capture the detail you see along the edge of the leaf. It might be exaggerated in areas with lots of details, and it will probably be messy. That's ok. That's the point!

Materials:

- Nature Journal
- Pen or pencil
- Crayon with the paper removed

Instructions:

Head outside and choose a tree to observe. We recommend choosing a native species of tree. You'll most likely find a native tree along a more wild edge, or perhaps in a local park. However, if you only have cultivated trees nearby, you can still observe one! Pick one leaf from the tree you've chosen and take it to a comfortable spot for observation and journaling. We're going to work on recording your leaf in three different ways.

Blind Contour Drawing: Choose a spot on the edge of the leaf as a starting point. Place your pencil on the paper. (*Your pencil should be in a place where, once you have drawn the entire leaf, you won't run out of paper!*) Look back at your leaf. Follow the edge of your leaf with your eye, and begin drawing, following these rules:

- Follow the outer edge of your subject with your eye
- Don't look at your paper
- Don't lift your pencil from the paper

Only when your eye (*and your pencil*) have travelled all the way around the leaf should you take your eye off the leaf and your pencil off the page.

Veins + Contour Drawing: Your second task is to apply the skills you practiced in the blind contour drawing with close observation of your leaf's structure to create a detailed diagram of your leaf.

- In the center, draw the major veins on your leaf. Pay close attention to the angles between them and their relative lengths.
- Create a contour drawing of the basic shape of the edge of the leaf, connecting each of the veins. This is not a blind contour drawing — you can look at the paper.
- Create a more detailed contour drawing of the details of the leaf edge. Again, this is not a blind contour drawing, but you should still follow the edge of your leaf carefully with your eye and capture as much detail as possible.
- Add more detail to the center of your leaf including additional veins and any blemishes or holes.
- Add notes to describe interesting features and details.

Leaf Rubbing: Your final task, and perhaps the simplest, is to create a leaf rubbing.

- Place your leaf beneath the fresh page, between it and the next page.
- Peel the paper off your crayon so you can use its edge.
- Press down on the page to hold your leaf in place.
- Rub the edge of the crayon over the page with your leaf underneath to make the details of your leaf appear!

Having fun?

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