

Painting With Soil



Teaching Objective

“To gain a deeper appreciation of soils -- one of our most important natural resources.”

Introduction

Soils are one of our most important natural resources. They also are important for the beauty their many colors add to our landscapes. Most of us overlook this natural beauty because we see it every day. Often these colors blend with vegetation, sky, water, etc. Soil colors serve as pigments in bricks and pottery.

If you look at the works of many of the great artists, you will notice that “earth colors” are dominant. The color and texture of soil painting is fascinating and a creative opportunity for all ages of students.

Materials

soil (dried in air)
hammer or mallet
mortar and pestle (rubber-tipped)
paper cups (4 oz.)
pencils
ink pens (black, different tip sizes)
paint brushes (different kinds and sizes)
artist acrylic (clear gloss medium)
sponges and rags
water color paper
masking tape

Procedure

Soils

1. Gather soils of various colors.
2. Place each dried soil sample on a piece of paper and crush into pieces with hammer or mallet.

[Figure, Step 1a](#)

3. Place some of the crushed soil into a mortar. Use a rubber-tipped pestle to crush the soil into a fine powder. Repeat to crush all of the different colored soils.
[Figure, Step 1b](#)
4. Place the different soils in paper cups -- notice the colors and textures.

Artwork

1. Lightly sketch art work on water color paper with a pencil. When satisfied with composition, use ink for permanent lines.
2. With masking tape, carefully tape paper edges to table or board. This is done so that the art work will dry flat.
[Figure, Step 1c](#)
3. Pour small amounts of artist acrylic in small paper cups. Add small amounts of soil. Experiment with depth of color and mixing the different soils.
4. Use different sizes and kinds of paint brushes, sponges, and rags. Experiment and have fun.
5. Layering colors. When your art work is dry, you may apply another layer of soil paint.
6. You may want to use a black ink pen to make finishing touches on your artwork.

Activity Time

The estimated time is about 1 hour.