



CREATE ART FROM NATURE

with the Allentown Art Museum

A Beginner's Guide to Foraging





This guide is designed to help you form a deeper connection with both art and nature. Through careful exploration and mindful creativity, you'll be inspired to stretch your imagination while discovering the beauty of our natural world.



For each of the four do-it-yourself projects in this guide you'll need to get outside to forage for plants, minerals, and other organic materials. (See next page for foraging tools and tips.)

Once you have your foraged materials, head home and prepare to transform them into works of art! The juice from pokeweed berries, for example, can be turned into ink, and ground mica stone can create an iridescent watercolor wash.



Follow the directions for the four projects that follow—and have fun!



Tools for Foraging

- Scissors
- Trowel
- Knife
- Notebook
- Jar
- Basket/Mesh Bag
- Pen
- Guide Books/Your Phone



Forage Responsibly

- 1 Safety first! Watch out for spines, thorns, and more—some plants and mushrooms can irritate your skin or worse.
- 2 Make sure you have the right plant! Use at least two separate species sources, such as mushroomexpert.com or [Peterson Field Guide](#).
When in doubt, throw it out.
- 3 Be kind to native plants—they support our ecosystem.
- 4 Use invasive plants liberally—it helps control them and makes space for native plants.
- 5 There are no bold and old foragers—start slow.

**Please note that this guide is meant for art making.
Do not consume any foraged materials.**



Project #1: Papermaking



Tools

Blender • Scrap Paper • Mould and Deckle • Shallow Bin • Water • Sponge • Felt

Forage for these: Flowers, native seeds, leaves

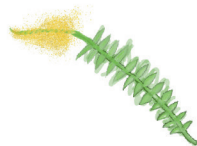


How-to

- 1 Tear paper into small pieces and soak overnight.
- 2 Process the soaked paper in a blender, adding water as needed to make a pulp.
- 3 Add a handful of the paper pulp and foraged materials to the basin of water.
- 4 Dip the mould and deckle into the bottom of the basin and slowly lift. Allow the water to drain until it slows to a drip.
- 5 Place the paper between the felt and sponge to soak up the excess water until the paper releases.
- 6 Dry paper.



Project #2: Watercolor



Tools

Glass • Paint Muller • Water • Brushes • Mortar and Pestle • Palette Knife • Fine Mesh Sifter • Watercolor Binder (1/2 cup gum arabic, 1 cup water, few drops of clove oil, 1/5 cup honey)

Forage for these: flowers, leaves, berries, petals (goldenrod works great!)



How-to

- 1 Finely grind plants with mortar and pestle, then sift.
- 2 Mix equal parts watercolor binder and ground plants.
- 3 Use palette knife and paint muller to incorporate pigment.
- 4 Use palette knife to put paint in container.
- 5 Paint a flower or other natural wonder!

Tip

Watercolors can be allowed to dry out for future use (just add water)





Project #3: Fabric Dying

Tools

Nonsynthetic Fabric • Stock Pot • Water • Twine • 10% Aluminum Solution (this compound helps the dye sticks to the fabric)

Forage for these: Black Walnut, Queen Anne's Lace, Willow, Oak



How-to

- 1 Soak your fabric and foraged materials in the 10% aluminum solution.
- 2 Lay fabric flat and arrange plants in desired pattern.
- 3 Roll up fabric and tie tightly with twine.
- 4 Boil or steam fabric roll for about 30 minutes.
- 5 Unwrap and remove plants, let dry.

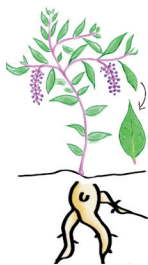


Project #4: Anthotype Printmaking

Tools

Watercolor Paper • Brushes • Rubbing Alcohol • Sunlight • 1 cup Pokeberries • Gloves • UV Resistant Sealant • Strainer

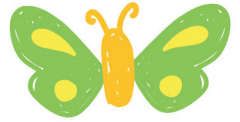
Forage for this: Pokeweed (*Phytolacca Americana*), featuring 10-inch alternating leaves, pink stems, veins, and dark-purple berries. This plant is native to Pennsylvania.



How-to

- 1 Crush berries into 1/4 cup of rubbing alcohol.
- 2 Soak for 5 minutes, then strain out the solids.
- 3 Dip or paint the liquid onto the paper fully with the liquid and let dry.
- 4 Place plants on the paper and expose to the sun.
- 5 Once background lightens to the desired shade, remove plants and apply UV sealant.





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projects!

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or email

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This guide is inspired by the exhibition ***Scarlet Poppies and Ultramarine Butterflies: The Language of Color***, which was on view at the Allentown Art Museum in Allentown, Pennsylvania, from June 1 through September 29, 2024.

Scarlet Poppies and Ultramarine Butterflies is one in a series of American art exhibitions created through a multi-year, multi-institutional partnership formed by the Philadelphia Museum of Art as part of the Art Bridges Cohort Program.



Scarlet Poppies and Ultramarine Butterflies was generously supported by Crayola, Rick and Michelle Stringer, the Martin Guitar Charitable Foundation, and the County of Lehigh.

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The instructions and drawings in this guide were provided by **Rain Black, MPH, CPH**, who led the foraging and art-making program “Nature’s Palette” for the Allentown Art Museum during the summer of 2024. Rain is a watercolor artist and forager with a Masters degree in epidemiology and can be reached at wanderrenwilds@gmail.com and [@WanderRenWilds](https://www.instagram.com/WanderRenWilds).



Thank you to the Allentown Department of Parks and Recreation for collaborating on the “Nature’s Palette” program and this guide.

Land Acknowledgement

The Lehigh Valley encompasses Lenape, Delaware, and Susquehannock ancestral lands. Treat these lands with reverence and respect.