



LESSON 17 LEVEL C ORGANIC SHAPES

BOTANICAL DRAWING

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

drawing a plant with scientific realism

WHAT YOU WILL NEED: drawing paper; pencil; fine line pen; (optional) watercolor paints or colored pencils.

TIPS: Gather some plant specimens such as twigs with several leaves or flowers with stems and leaves attached to draw indoors. Or, go outdoors with paper and drawing board to draw a small clump of grass, weeds or wildflowers.



Albrecht Dürer The Great Piece of Turf 1502
Vienna, Albertina

GETTING STARTED: Botany is the science or study of plants. For centuries, botanists have illustrated their writing with careful, detailed, scientifically accurate drawings. This is not the time to use imagination. Pretend you are a camera producing a close-up photograph! Look at botanical drawings in books about plants. Study the nature drawings of Albrecht Dürer, who lived at the same time as Christopher Columbus. Notice how realistic they appear, with controlled shading and overlapping shapes to suggest three dimensions.

1. Place your botanical specimen so that it will not shift its position, about 1 meter (3 feet) away from your eyes. It should be in good light so you can observe tiny details.
2. Spend at least one full minute just looking at your plant specimen. Don't draw anything yet. Examine how the stem branches and how the leaves, buds and flowers join the stem. What is the texture of each part? the size?

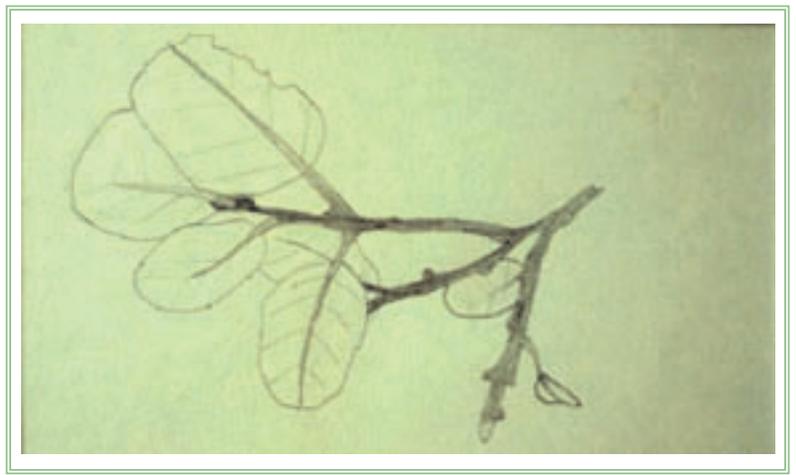


the color? How will you show all the parts as your eyes see them, not what you imagine or remember or guess they look like? Now, look, look, look and draw, then look, look, look again, as though you were a real botanist. The secret of success here is to look more minutes than you draw.

3. Make your first line light and



Bradley Age 12



Seetha Age 12

sure. It may help to think of your pencil point as an ant climbing along the stem and out onto the leaf, slowly and deliberately.

4. When you have drawn the complete specimen, go over your lines in pen or finish your art work with colored pencils. Or, omit the pen drawing and use watercolors, still working slowly and carefully.

5. Botanists label their drawings with both the common name and the official, Latin name of the plant. You may want to do this, too, as you sign your botanical drawing.

CLEAN UP: There is not much to clean up with this lesson. Put away your materials. Enjoy your plant as long as possible, so viewers can see how accurately you worked. You will need to throw it away and wipe up any seeds, bark, etc. it may have dropped.

TALK ABOUT IT: Does your drawing show texture as well as outline? Are the proportions right? Which is more challenging for you, realistic or imaginative drawing? Why?

CONNECTIONS: Albrecht Dürer lived when Gutenberg was producing books on his new printing press and Martin Luther was questioning the traditional religion of his country. Find out about these and other famous people of the Renaissance in Germany.