

Book of Leaves

Collect, preserve, and “publish” an arbor anthology for tree identification any time of year

(art + science)

What are trees good for? Besides being majestic and beautiful, trees are incredibly useful! Not only do trees protect us from the “Greenhouse Effect” of warming temperatures on our planet, they also reduce soil erosion and water pollution. Managed forests give us lumber and plywood. Artists use wood to make furniture or to carve bowls and other items on a lathe, and of course, we all need paper!

We also know that trees house many insects and birds. Some trees can even provide us food items such as nuts, fruit, or maple syrup! Trees are extensively planted in urban areas because they are even able to decrease noise pollution along busy streets.

Preserving and “publishing” the many ways trees are magnificent and essential can be simple, colorful, and instructive. Leaves can be preserved at any time of year using Mod Podge. The reds and oranges of fall leaves are beautiful when they come into their brightest hues. And spring and summer leaves are just as pretty with their fresh green tones. Gather leaves to use in a fan-shaped identification book that will last for years.

GRADES 3-8 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Gather fresh leaves and press overnight in the pages of heavy books.
2. Each student will need two small twigs no more than 3” long.
3. Lay out sheets of palette paper on tables.



Materials (required)

Plaid Mod Podge, Gloss Finish, Quart (02916-1007); share one across class

Foam Brush, 1” (05114-1001); one per student

Blick Studio Disposable Palette Pads, 50 Sheets, 16” x 20” (03063-2008); share one across class

Blick Studio Watercolor Paper by Fabriano, package of 20 Sheets, 9-1/2” x 13” (10080-1021); share across class by cutting into 4” x 8” sheets

Aleene’s Quick Dry Tacky Glue, 4 oz (23884-1104); share three across class

Lineco Gummed Quick Bind Tape (12828-1002); share across class

Fiskars Hand Punches, Circle 1/4” (58923-1003); share three across class

Ribbon Assortment, 20 yards (62100-1040); share across class

Small twigs, two per student

Materials (optional)

Midwest Products Genuine Balsa Wood, Sheets (33301-)

Blick Liquid Watercolors (00369-)

Brusho Crystal Colours (01762-)

Blick Studio Brush Markers and Sets (24532-)

Canson Bristol Plate Art Board (13433-1008)

Grafix Vellum (56892-)



Process

1. The day after leaf gathering, and after they've been pressed enough to lie flat, begin preserving the leaves. This process will not work if the leaves have been left to dry out too much.
2. Use one sheet of pallet paper as the "Mod Podge" station. Lay a leaf on the sheet, and using a foam brush, coat the top surface of the leaf with Mod Podge. Each time a leaf is coated, be sure to place it on a clean area of the paper. (The Mod Podge station will need to have sheets of paper replaced as necessary to provide a clean work station). Immediately transfer the leaf to a clean sheet of pallet paper to dry. Do all the gathered leaves in this manner.
3. Repeat this process to coat the underside of each leaf. Let dry completely. If any of the leaves begin to curl again, a brief pressing in a book when dry will do the trick to flatten them back out.
4. Choose a preserved leaf and match with a 4" x 8" piece of watercolor or other stiff paper. Embellish each sheet of paper with watercolors or markers to showcase the leaf; write in facts such as: the name, genus, species, and where or when the leaf was found.
5. Glue the leaf onto the 4" x 8" sheet of paper towards one end so the leaf itself extends beyond the page. On the other end of the page, apply a small square of gummed book tape in the center where the punch will be. Punch a hole. Measure that the hole is centered on the first page, and use that page as a template to mark a hole for additional pages. If the paper is very thin, add book tape to both sides of the page.
6. Once the Book of Leave's pages are all complete, it's time to create the book! Create a front and back cover from durable material. Anything that can be punched will work. Cardboard, Bristol board, mat board, or even a basswood sheet would make a great cover. Assemble all pages in order, and thread

a ribbon or piece of cord through all the punched holes. Tie the ribbon around a small twig on the front and back of the book to keep it from going back through the holes.



Options

— Do a drawing using a brush trip marker on a large pressed leaf and frame

National Core Arts Standards -

Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen



Step 1: Preserve fresh leaves by coating the front and back with Mod Podge.



Step 2: Embellish 4" x 8" book pages with paint, markers, and information about each leaf. Glue a preserved leaf to the end of each page.



Step 3: Make a front and back cover, then assemble pages into a fan-shaped leaf anthology by threading ribbon through the pages.