

Painting with Nature

I am very fortunate to live on a large bush block and over Easter I decided to go on a little nature treasure hunt. I put on my good old favourite walking boots, took a basket in hand and whistled to my doggies (who didn't need much coaxing knowing it was walk time!) and off we went.

It is sometimes hard to see autumn on my block as it is mostly eucalypts and native scrub, but I headed for the one big pine tree we have, which is usually the best place at this time of year to spot one of my favourite autumn nature treasures that pop out from under the dense bed of pine needles.



I am always certain that the fairies are near when I see these perfect little toadstools with their shock of color among the green moss and pine needles!

It didn't take long to begin filling my basket with treasures that I found along the way!



And if you look closely on the ground it is such a delight to see the multitude of little signs of life and activity that can be found.



All the color and life inspired me to explore how I could transform this into something new, and hence I decided to try making some paints from plant material. What fun I had and I hope these instructions inspire you to have a play with what you can find in your garden, on walks, and in nature. Enjoy!

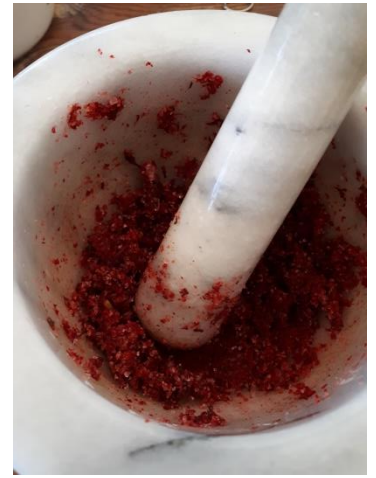




To make my paints I firstly looked for some plant materials with strong color. I was hoping to find the 3 primary colors, red, yellow and blue.

I discovered some red geraniums so I tried those first! I pulled off the petals and put them in a pestle and mortar with a little coarse salt and ground them into a paste.

I then added a little boiling water and made a plant 'brew', let it seep for a bit then I strained this through a tea strainer into a jar.



I added a very small amount of cornflour to the strained liquid to thicken it slightly but this is optional.

I repeated the process with my collection of greens, which contained herbs, olive leaves and various greens from my garden.



It was hard to find blues and yellows so I used some turmeric powder to make a yellow. You could try other things like berries, beetroot, red onion skins, purple carrots, which all contain great properties for extracting color. Experiment with your children and see what you come up with. They will enjoy searching, grinding and watching the transformation. I was very happy with my results which provided 3 beautiful warm and natural colors to paint with.



To add another level of fun, engage the children more deeply and extend this activity you could also make your own simple nature paint brushes. Simply find some lovely strong sticks and some leaves, plants native grasses or other nature object – pine needles work wonderfully! With a little wool or twine attach these to the end of the sticks and voila a beautiful paintbrush for your new nature painting!



We would love to see what you come up with at home, so please share your results with us ☺

