

For adults and children in the garden

Natural painting

Natural England wants to give a million children the chance to discover the outdoors. The natural world is a fascinating place to explore and our natural habitats together with the creatures and plants that live there can provide endless sources of fun. From your own back yard to the wilds of our national nature reserves, now is the time to make the most of the outdoors and go wild!

Together with Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield (www.goingwild.net), authors of Nature's Playground, Go Wild and Make it Wild (www.franceslincoln.com), we've produced these fantastic activity sheets to give you plenty of ideas of what you can get up to, what are you waiting for?



The natural world is awash with colour, from the fresh green of spring to the rich yellows and reds of autumn. Have a go at discovering whether berries, leaves or earth from the wildlife area might release colour, then use your natural paints to create outdoor pictures such as these ones inspired by aboriginal designs.

What you need

- Sources of natural colour – such as berries, leaves, soil, charcoal or chalk,
- Pestle and mortar,
- Plastic containers,
- Old sieve or tea strainer,
- Old paint brushes.

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Making your own paints

- **White** – Chalk. Grind chalk into a powder, and mix with a little water to make a paste the consistency of double cream.
- **Black** – Burnt wood, ash or charcoal. Collect some ash or charcoal from a fireplace then grind it up and mix it with water.
- **Purple and red** – Berries such as blackberries, raspberries and rose hips. Squeeze through a sieve to make a puree; add a little water if need be
- **Brown** – mud/clay. Try collecting mud and clay in different locations, as there are surprising variations in colour, from deep brown to a rich red. Rotting wood or bark should also release a brown colour.
- **Red/brown** – we made a rich red brown colour by crushing up a bit of old brick – a bit of a cheat, but at least it was made from clay!
- **Green** – grass and leaves. Pound the leaves well with the pestle and mortar to release the green tinged sap. If the resulting colour isn't strong enough, try boiling leaves with a little water to help release the colour.



Outdoor painting

The earliest artists used natural colours such as charcoal, berries and clay to create their cave paintings. Encourage the children to look for pictures of cave paintings and aboriginal designs as a source of inspiration for their own outdoor painting. Don't just try your paints out on paper – try them on wood, bark, stones or leaves. And for a real Stone Age experience, use feathers, moss or even dried grass instead of an ordinary paintbrush.



Safety tips

- Some colours may stain,
- Don't let the children collect poisonous berries,
- Wash hands well after natural painting.



Disclaimer: Please note, anyone taking part in these activities do so entirely at their own risk. Natural England together with the authors and publishers of these activities do not accept any legal responsibility for any harm, injury, damage, loss or prosecution resulting from the activities described.