WEEKDAY WONDERS

Content developed by the Tennessee Aquarium Education Department

TENNESSEE AQUARIUM

Wild World of Art: Day 5

Art is just as important as science to help us understand our world. This week in Weekday Wonders, your young scientist will explore the wild world of art through nature! Your scientist will experiment with using different materials from nature including rocks, dirt, water, sticks, and leaves to create amazing artworks.

These curated activities are listed in a suggested sequence but may be done in the order that works best for you and your young scientists. Learn more about this series in the Introduction to Weekday Wonders.

Question of the Day

What kind of art can you make with leaves?

Daily Nature Journal

Spending some time outside completing their daily nature journal is a great way for young scientists to learn to notice details in the environment. If you need help encouraging your young scientist, use the Guide to Nature Journaling to support them in nature journaling each day.

Looking at Leaves

Share the following information with your young scientist, depending on which activities you have worked on. This week, we've worked our way from rocks on Day 1 that eroded into soil on Day 2. On Day 3 we added water to our world of art, just as we must have it for life to exist on our planet. The plants that grew produced sticks for inspiration on Day 4 and now we wrap up our Wild World of Art with a leaf celebration!

Encourage your young scientist to spend time outside or looking out a window and focusing on leaves. Ask some inspiring questions such as

- Can you see different colors?
- Do all the leaves look as if they would feel the same?
- What shapes can you find?

- When the wind blows (even gently) do the leaves all move the same way or are there differences?
- How do leaves sound as they move?

Ask your young scientist to write or draw his/her impressions while observing leaves. Encourage him/her to add a leaf rubbing to the journal or trace around a leaf and then draw in the veins and color it.

Leaf Pictures

Challenge your young scientist to gather leaves from your yard or neighborhood and use them to compose a picture by gluing the leaves on paper. Leaves of different colors, shapes, and sizes can be used to make pictures of people, animals, buildings, and landscapes. Your young scientist can tear, cut, and overlap leaves to make them work in his/her art work.

Now You See It, Now You Don't

Gather the materials your young scientist will need for this activity: acrylic paint (art or house paint), a paintbrush, an old toothbrush, and paper. You may also wish to have some tape, a craft stick or skewer, and fabric that your scientist can paint.

Help your young scientist make leaf prints on fabric or paper in two different ways. First, have your scientist brush paint on the surface of a leaf and press it gently onto the paper. Using this method, the two sides of a leaf make very different images. Have your scientist try different leaves to see what the results are.

Second, help your young scientist make a reverse image of a leaf using a spatter technique. Put a leaf on a sheet of paper or piece of fabric. You may want to secure it with a little loop of tape on the underside. Have your scientist dip the bristles of an old toothbrush in paint and from directly above the leaf, spatter the paint on leaf and paper/fabric by pulling a craft stick, skewer, stick, or other rigid tool across the toothbrush bristles TOWARD him- or herself. If s/he pushes the tool away it will spatter your scientist rather than the leaf. Suggest that your young scientist experiment with medleys of leaves or different color combinations.

Either of these methods is a good way to decorate t-shirts, pillow cases, handkerchiefs, bookcases, cabinets, or accent walls.

Hammer On!

Have your young scientist gather leaves from outside. The leaves should be fresh, not dry. Encourage your scientist to find a variety of shapes and colors, but very tough leaves (such as magnolia leaves) do NOT tend to work well for this project. Have your scientist arrange a leaf vein side down on a piece of white paper. Watercolor paper works best, but any white paper will do. Your

scientist should place a paper towel on top of the leaves. Have your young scientist carefully pound the leaves with a hammer or mallet until the color is visible through the paper towel. Make sure that your scientist pounds every part of the leaf.

As your scientist pounds the leaf, the leaf's cells burst apart and the pigment is transferred to the paper. Have your scientist experiment with different levels of pressure. What can they do to get the most color out of the leaves? If they pound too hard, do they lose the shape of the leaf? This art project is excellent for making handmade cards or bookmarks.

Dancing Leaves

Encourage your young scientist to go outside in your yard or neighborhood and notice the shapes of leaves. Urge your scientist to watch how the leaves move when the wind blows or when s/he blows on them.

After observing a particular leaf, ask your young scientist to hold his or her body in the shape of the leaf. Your scientist can choose to represent the whole leaf shape or just the shape of leaf edges. Have your scientist try to move the same way the leaf does when air blows on it. See if s/he can make an interpretive dance to show other characteristics of the leaf.

Once your young scientist has the hang of this, have him or her choose different leaves around the area, observe them, and make up a movement piece to identify each. See if you can find the leaves based on your young scientist's dance.