

Nature's Artist

Learning objectives:

Pattern discovery: to observe that different trees and leaves have unique patterns that 'magically' appear on paper.

Hand-eye coordination: to develop the ability to keep the paper still with one hand, while rubbing with the other.

Cause and effect: to understand that a physical action (rubbing) creates a direct visual result (the image appearing).





Practitioner knowledge:

The bark of trees provides a vital layer of protection for a tree, helping to keep out insects that may damage the delicate internal parts of the tree. Without the bark, the flow of water and nutrients can be impacted, which can affect the tree's ability to survive, especially a young tree.

The leaves on a tree have an important job of photosynthesis; using the energy from the sun to absorb carbon dioxide from the air, turning it into carbon to enable the tree to grow, and 'breathing out' the oxygen back into the air.

Crayon rubbing is a classic 'magic moment' activity. It transforms the invisible textures of nature into a visible pattern on paper. It's also an excellent way to practice bilateral coordination (using both hands at once) and investigate cause and effect.



What you will need:

Paper: thin paper works best!

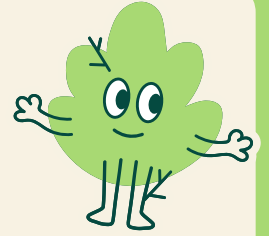
Crayons: large, chunky crayons if possible.

A clipboard (optional): having something like a clipboard to lean on makes rubbing leaves much easier.

A premade cardboard frame (optional): to turn rubbings into a work of art (it can make a good photo opportunity too!)



Activity 1 - The Tree Hug (bark rubbing)



Find a 'bumpy' tree: look for a tree with deep ridges or patterns on the bark.

Place the paper: hold paper onto the trunk of the tree.

Rub the crayon: hold the crayon sideways against the paper rather than using the tip and rub across your paper.

The reveal: as you rub, the pattern of the bark will magically appear.

Frame it: place the rubbing inside the premade frame to create an instant masterpiece!



Activity 2 - The Leaf Skeleton (leaf rubbing)

The 'bumpy side' secret: this is the most important part! Turn the leaf over so the veins are facing up. These bumps are what create the image.

Make a leaf sandwich: place the leaf on a flat surface or clipboard and put the paper directly on top.

Steady hands: hold the crayon sideways (horizontally) against the paper rather than using the tip and rub against the paper.

The reveal: as you rub, the pattern of the leaf will magically appear. Why not do more than one leaf on a piece of paper, using different colours.

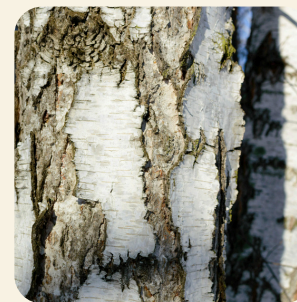
Frame it: place the rubbing inside the premade frame to create an instant masterpiece!

Good trees for bark rubbing:



Oak or Pine

These have deep cracks, giving a great stripy pattern.



Silver Birch

Smoother but will give a lined pattern for a gentler effect.

Good trees for leaf rubbing:



Sycamore

They are large, flat, and have thick, woody veins that act like a perfect stencil.



Horse Chestnut

(conker tree)
These leaves are massive (shaped like a hand) and provide a big canvas to work on.



Oak

These have a very iconic shape and strong central veins and are quite tough so won't tear easily.