

# Painting with Nature

## Learning objectives:

Children will use natural objects to make marks and patterns.

Children will learn that we can reuse natural materials for art.

Children will explore colours and textures.



cadwch keep  
gymru'n wales  
daclus tidy





## Practitioner knowledge

Many standard paints are made with synthetic pigments, plastic-based binders, preservatives and other additives.

Some conventional paints can also release volatile organic compounds, known as VOCs, which may affect indoor air quality while the paint is drying and after use.

Choosing more natural and re-used resources helps children see that art does not always need to come from new, shop-bought materials.

Painting with nature encourages children to notice colour, texture and pattern in the world around them while reducing reliance on single-use craft items.

By using fallen leaves, twigs, petals, soil or other safe natural materials, you can support creativity, sensory exploration and environmental responsibility in a simple, hands-on way.

Natural paints are wonderful for sensory exploration but may not be as bright or long-lasting as shop-bought paint.

Some ingredients, especially turmeric, beetroot and berries, may stain hands, clothing or surfaces, so use wipeable table covers and outdoor space where possible.

Always check allergies and supervise closely, especially with children who may still explore materials with their mouths.





## How to make your own natural paint

- Collect safe natural colour ingredients such as beetroot, turmeric, spinach, berries, soil or petals. Avoid anything unknown, poisonous, prickly or likely to irritate skin.
- Prepare the colour by chopping, crushing, grating or mashing the ingredient in a bowl.
- Add a small splash of warm water and stir or mash until the colour begins to come out. Use less water for a stronger colour and more water for a lighter wash.
- Strain the mixture through a sieve, muslin cloth or reusable coffee filter to remove large pieces. Keep the coloured liquid in a small bowl or reused jar
- To thicken the paint, mix in a small amount of flour, cornflour or arrowroot powder until it reaches a paint-like texture. Add the thickener slowly so children can observe how the texture changes.
- Test the paint on scrap paper, cardboard or reused packaging. Adjust by adding more natural colour, more water or more thickener as needed.
- Use the paint straight away with brushes, fingers, leaves, twigs, feathers or other natural mark-making tools.



## Natural ingredients for different colours

|                    |                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Pink or red</b> | Beetroot juice, raspberries, strawberries, rose petals or red cabbage water with a small squeeze of lemon.               |
| <b>Yellow</b>      | Turmeric powder, dandelion petals, marigold petals or onion skins.                                                       |
| <b>Orange</b>      | Paprika, carrot juice, orange peel or a mix of beetroot and turmeric.                                                    |
| <b>Green</b>       | Spinach, grass, mint leaves, or parsley.                                                                                 |
| <b>Purple</b>      | Blueberries, blackberries or red cabbage.                                                                                |
| <b>Blue</b>        | Red cabbage water mixed with a tiny pinch of bicarbonate of soda, or crushed blueberries for a softer blue-purple shade. |
| <b>Brown</b>       | Soil, mud, coffee grounds, cocoa powder, cinnamon or crushed autumn leaves.                                              |