Anthotype Printing

GENERAL INFORMATION

Target Audience	Ages 3 and up (with adult supervision)
Recommended Number of Participants	5 participants per instructor
Activity Duration	90 minutes + 1 day for drying
Recommended Season	Any time of year

OBJECTIVES

- 🌱 Learn about local plants
- 🌱 Connect with nature
- 🌱 Learn the basics of identifying tree species
- 🌱 Use natural elements to create artistic compositions
- 🌱 Discover different ways to print leaves on paper
- 🌱 Develop fine motor skills through printing
- 🌱 Recognize basic geometric shapes in natural print materials

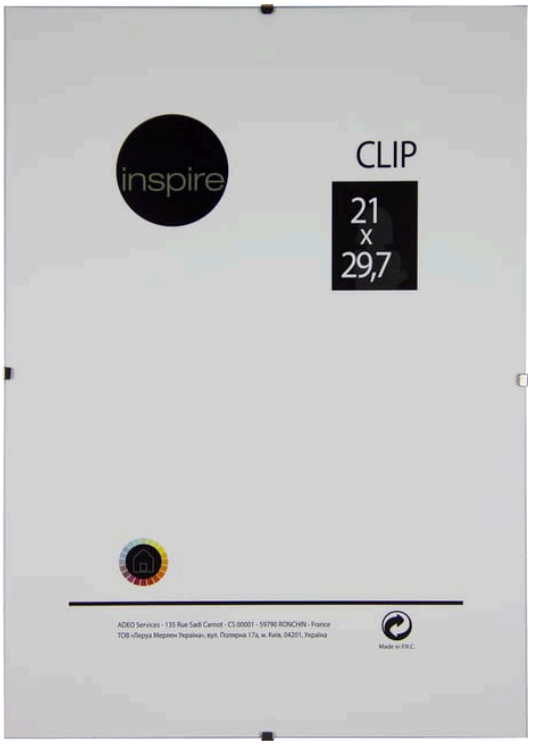
SUMMARY

Participants will take a walk in their surroundings to collect plant materials. They will then make prints using the selected materials and a natural dye that they will help prepare.

MATERIALS

- 🌱 Plant materials, leaves and flowers for printing
- 🌱 Watercolor paper (A4 or A5), one per participant
- 🌱 Sponges, at least one per participant
- 🌱 Mortars, one per every 3 participants
- 🌱 Bowls, one or two per natural dye
- 🌱 Spinach, 1 kg per 10 participants
- 🌱 Beets, 4 units per 10 participants
- 🌱 Turmeric, 1 jar (not all will be used)
- 🌱 Spoons, 1 per natural dye
- 🌱 Scissors

- 🌱 Grater
- 🌱 Alcohol or water
- 🌱 Filters, one for spinach and one for beet.
- 🌱 Picture frames, 1 per participant.



- 🌱 Tree label, to label local trees before starting the activity
- 🌱 Tags, to label the plant name on each print
- 🌱 Opaque jars
- 🌱 Painter's tape

ACTIVITY RATIONALE

Anthotype is a photographic technique that uses the photosensitive qualities of certain plant pigments—the same pigments that give plants their color. Photosensitivity refers to the ability of some plant pigments to degrade and change color when exposed to sunlight. This characteristic and its potential for use in printing were discovered in the early 19th century.

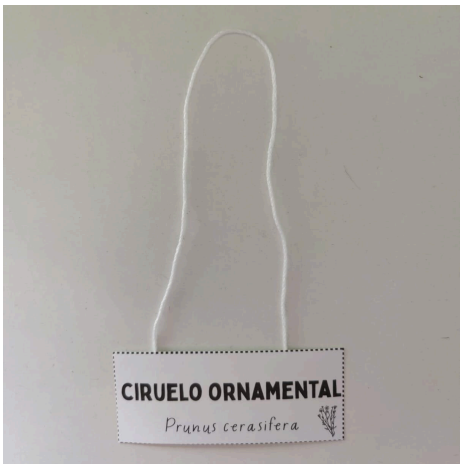
With this activity, participants will observe how photosynthetic pigments work while using their imagination to create different compositions using plant extracts. It's a great opportunity for them to learn how to create art from natural materials.

The second part of the activity involves identifying some of the plants simply by comparing their leaves with those on local trees. This helps raise awareness of the biodiversity in their immediate environment.

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

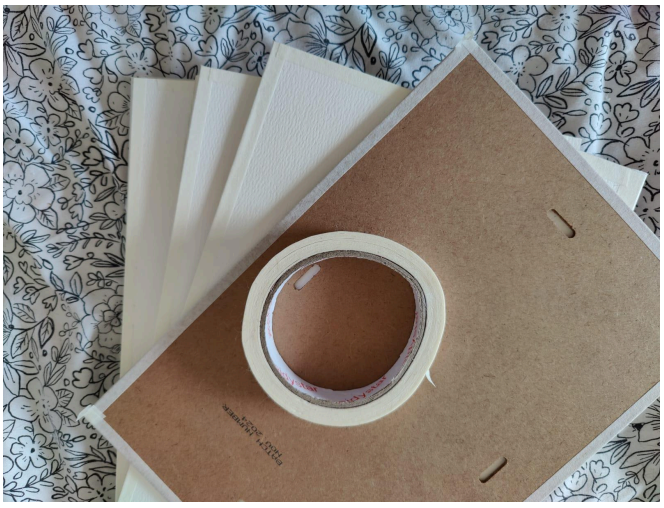
1° Visit the location where the activity will take place to identify the plant species there. Collect sample leaves or flowers.

2° Label the trees from which plant material was collected, placing a sign with the species name.



3° Prepare spinach, beet, and turmeric dyes the day before and store them in opaque jars in case there's a problem during the activity or participants don't make enough dye.

4° Tape a piece of watercolor paper into each picture frame using painter’s tape.



STEPS TO FOLLOW

1° Activity Introduction. Explain the activity and, in simple terms, how plant pigments react to sunlight to perform photosynthesis. We'll use this property to create our prints.

2° Dye Preparation

Spinach Dye:

- Chop spinach leaves and place them in a mortar
- Add a bit of water and grind them
- When a paste is formed, put it in the filter over a bowl
- Use a spoon (or hands) to press the spinach paste to extract the dye into the bowl
- Discard the leftover pulp

Beet Dye:

- Grate the boiled beetroot
- Place the grated beet into a filter over a bowl
- Use a spoon (or hands) to press the pulp to extract the dye
- Discard the remains left in the filter

Turmeric Dye:

- Mix about 3 tablespoons of turmeric with 0.3 L of water or alcohol in a bowl
- Alcohol dries faster, but water works just as well
- The mixture should be liquid but slightly thicker than water
- Avoid lumps

3° Painting the Paper

- Use a sponge to apply the dye to the watercolor paper, covering it completely
- Participants can use different dyes on the same sheet as they wish
- Squeeze out excess dye from the sponge to avoid soaking the paper
- Use a separate sponge for each dye to avoid mixing colors

4° Layering

- Apply at least three layers of dye to the paper, letting it dry between coats

5° Creating the Composition

- Once the paper is dry, arrange the selected plant materials on it to create a composition

6° Framing

- Place the glass from the picture frame over the composition as if framing a photo

- Ensure the glass presses flat against the paper so the edges of the shapes remain sharp

7° Plant Identification Walk

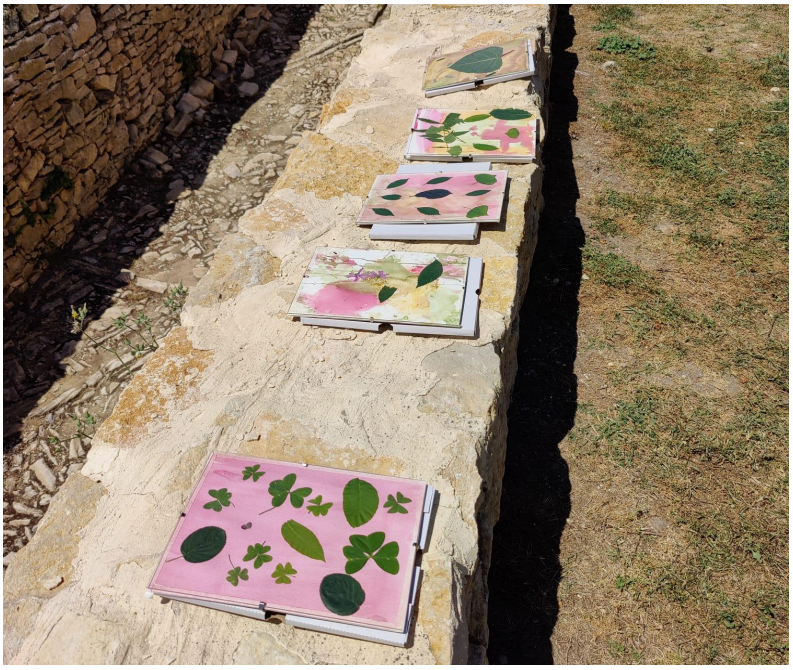
- Take a short walk to find the tree or plant the materials came from

8° Labeling

- Write the name(s) of the species on a card

9° Sun Exposure

- Place the framed composition in a sunny spot so the dye can react with the sunlight and change color.



10° Finishing

- After a day in the sun, open the frame, remove the leaves, attach the label with the tree name, and reassemble the frame