**Facts to Know**

**Suggested group size:** three to four children per adult volunteer

**Time frame:** group meeting 30 to 60 minutes

**Recommended ages:** 5- to 7-year-olds (kindergarten through second grade)

**Materials:**
- White craft paper
- Foamcore, poster or mat board
- Rubber cement
- Permanent markers
- Cardboard tubes
- Newspaper
- Sponges
- Leaves (real or artificial)
- Bird feathers
- Vegetables for printing (for example, potatoes, apples, carrots, mushrooms, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, avocados, starfruit, pears)
- Rubbing crayons
- Tempra or acrylic paints in assorted colors
- Foam paint brushes
- Cotton swabs (for example, Q-tips)
- Styrofoam trays or plates

---

**Background Knowledge**

Printmaking is the process of making artwork, typically on paper. Nature printing is an ancient art form that uses plants, animals, rocks and other natural objects to produce an image. A wide variety of objects are available for nature printing.

The printmaking process is able to produce multiples of the same pieces, each called a print. Each print (or impression) produced is an original and not considered a copy. This is because each impression is printed from an original plate. For this activity, the plate will be a natural object.
Learning Activities

Do: Getting Started
Leaf Rubbing (10 minutes)

Show an example of a leaf rubbing. Ask members, “What things in nature can we make a rubbing of?”

On a flat surface, place a leaf on top of a white sheet of paper with the veins facing up.

Cover the leaf with another sheet of white paper. Make sure the leaf is placed where the rubbing should show up on the sheet of paper.

Rub over the leaf with the side of a crayon with the paper peeled off. The design will show on the top sheet of paper.

Note: Members can use more than one color or more than one leaf on a piece of paper if they wish.

Do: Digging Deeper
Nature Printing (20 minutes)

Cover a tabletop with newspaper. Have members wear old or protective clothing.

Paint either the veined underside or the top side of a leaf with paint.

Place a leaf, painted side down, on white paper. Place scrap paper on top. Press with fingers or roll gently with a cardboard tube.

Repeat leaf printing three times without repainting the leaf. Did you use too little or too much paint? Did you press too hard or too lightly? If so, the print will be blotchy or incomplete.

Try using more than one leaf to make a combination design, or experiment using a feather or other natural object.
Cover a tabletop with newspaper. Have members wear old or protective clothing.

Cut the apples, mushrooms or other vegetables in half.

Make a paint pad. Saturate a sponge with paint and place on a Styrofoam tray or plate with enough paint to keep the sponge from drying out.

Members rub one-half of the apple, mushroom or other vegetable over the paint-soaked sponge and then print it onto the paper. Make imprints all over the paper.

If members use an apple, they may want to paint a stem or leaf on the impression.
Reflect/Apply

Reflect: Bringing Closure (10 minutes)

1. Create an art gallery. Mount one print impression from each member on a square piece of Foamcore, poster or mat board using rubber cement.

2. Ask each member to initial and number his or her original artwork in the lower right-hand corner with a permanent marker. When numbering, the bottom number is the total prints pulled, the top is the order they were pulled.
   Example: Five prints total, second print pulled. MAS 2/5

3. Hang finished print impressions along a wall and take a walking tour of the gallery as a group.

4. Ask each member to share the inspiration for his or her piece on display.

Apply: Going Beyond

1. Now that we know how nature printing is done, members can make a test print or two on a scrap piece of fabric. Use fabric pieces or a tote bag to make their nature print artwork.

2. Create a nature print tablecloth. Use artificial leaves painted with splashless bleach and press them onto a large piece of denim fabric. Let the bleach dry and then wash. Trim frayed denim edges for a fun, casual picnic tablecloth.

3. Create nature paint brushes. Use sticks, pine needles, flowers, etc., and tape to create creative nature paintbrushes. Paint with the brushes to create nature masterpieces.

Acknowledgements

Project Coordinator and Editor: Monique Snelgrove, Extension Agent, Center for 4-H Youth Development
Curriculum Consultant and Editor: Dean Aakre, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development
Author: Monique Snelgrove

For more information, see [www.ndsu.edu/4h](http://www.ndsu.edu/4h)