

ACTIVITY GUIDE

- NATURAL BLACKBERRY INKS & DIP PEN DRAWING



Connecting creatively to the
landscape of the Wye Valley AONB and Forest of Dean

NATURAL BLACKBERRY INK & DIP PEN DRAWING



The perfect time to pick delicious blackberries is late summer/early Autumn and why not use the leftovers to create your very own natural ink, which you can use to make beautiful drawings of other natural objects using a found stick as a dip pen. You may be lucky enough to have blackberries in the garden which you could pick as a group and become part of the activity.

Activity rating

This activity is suitable for most people of any age but the sharpening of the stick dip pen would be best undertaken by staff.

Preparation time

15 minutes to prepare for the activity including covering the tables with a cloth.

Time required for activity

40 - 60 minutes.

Shopping list

- o A bowl of blackberries either picked locally or a (defrosted) bag from the supermarket which you could do at any time of the year.
- o Pestle and mortar.
- o A teaspoon of salt and white vinegar (not essential unless keeping for a longer period of time).
- o Some kind of sieve.
- o Some small sticks/twigs from the garden.
- o A suitable knife to sharpen the sticks.
- o A pot to collect the berry ink.
- o Assorted papers for drawing.
- o Several natural objects to capture in your drawing, such as other plants, dried flowers/seed heads, leaves etc.
- o Aprons.

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Step by step instructions

1. Cover the work surface with a cloth as the berry juice may stain certain surfaces.
2. Take 4 or 5 blackberries and begin to crush them with the pestle and mortar to release the lovely dark red juice. Spend a couple of minutes doing this to achieve a really good depth of colour.
3. Pour all of the contents through the sieve with a suitable container to collect just the juice which is now your ink!
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until you have the correct amount for your group size. You will not need much as the ink will go a long way.
5. If you wish to preserve these drawings, add a very small teaspoon of white vinegar and salt, as this will help to prevent rotting and fading, although this is minimal and so not essential.
6. Take a small stick the size of a pencil and simply sharpen the end to a point. You can make really fine points or quite blunt points, and you will achieve different qualities of line when you produce your drawings.
7. Take your new dip pen and dip it into the berry ink making sure it has soaked some of the juice onto the wood before having a go at making some drawings. You will need to keep dipping the pen into the ink 2 or 3 times a minute.

NB: What you may notice is that the reddish ink colour changes over several minutes to a blue/grey colour! This is normal and due to the acid content in the paper you are using.

Top Tip!

- You can use the pestle and mortars for the natural earth painting activity.