

Painting with SOIL

Soils are important for the beauty their many colors add to our landscapes. Most of us overlook this natural beauty because we see it every day. Often these colors blend with vegetation, sky, water, etc. Soil colors serve as pigments in bricks, pottery and art work. The color and texture of soil painting is a fascinating and creative opportunity for students of all ages.

MATERIALS:

- 2-2 1/2 cups of each Color of Soil (*dried in the air*)
- Re-sealable plastic freezer bags
(*quart or gallon size depending upon the amount of soil*)
- Rolling Pin
- Sifters— 3 different mesh sizes
(*the smallest mesh would be close to a tea leaf strainer*)
- Paper Plates
- Plastic Cups *7oz for mixing, 3oz for sharing*
- Stir Sticks
- Water
- 5 oz Clear Acrylic Medium
- Water Color Paper (*this is thicker than "normal" paper and withstands the wetness of the paint*)
- Fine Point Permanent Black Markers
- Variety of Paint Brushes



"The trick with painting with landscapes is that it's normally hard to get the color right. But, when I paint with soil, the color comes from nature – and it's exactly right."

- Janis Lang

PROCEDURE

Preparing the Soils

1. Gather a variety of soil samples, with a variety of colors and textures.
***Only use soils that are found in your area or state. Do not obtain soil samples from other states or geographical areas. Soil contains living organisms (i.e. Fire ants) that you would want to import to your backyard! Kit of 5 soil samples is available from the Soil and Water Conservation Society—SD Chapter.*
2. Place the dried soil in a re-sealable freezer bag (freezer bags are heavier plastic).
3. Use the rolling pin to break down the large peds of soil.
4. Pour the contents of the bag into the sifter with the largest mesh.
5. Sift the soil through onto a paper plate. Put the large particles that are separated out to the side.
6. Pour the contents from the paper plate into the sifter with the medium mesh.
7. Sift the soil through onto a paper plate and set aside the large particles.
8. Pour the sifted contents from the paper plate into the sifter with the smallest mesh.
9. Sift onto a paper plate and set aside the large particles.
10. Pour the finest particles of soil on the paper plate into a plastic cup—you will need 1/2 cup of powdered soil.
11. Add enough water to make a "mud brownie." Stir until combined.
12. Add 1- 3 tsp. acrylic medium. (3 tsp = 1 ounce) Stir until combined and smooth. You want the consistency of craft paint.

Artwork

A pictograph (cave drawing) is an easier drawing for younger students. Older students could develop a landscape drawing. In landscape drawings, use *geographical* terms to describe objects and include them in the fore ground, middle ground and background. Use drawing techniques to add *perspective*. Add shading and other small details before painting. Using a pencil, start with a basic drawing. Have students define the details of their project with ink pens. Black ink shows through the soil paint. Using a variety of brushes, add color to your drawing with the paint samples.

