

## ***Special Topics: Creating Art from Natural Materials***

*Many believe that art with children only involves supplies like crayons, paint or paper. That, however, is not true! Here are some ways to think about including nature into your child's art experiences.*

### **Creating Art in Outdoor Environments**



My favorite natural/ephemeral (art that lasts a very short time) artist is **Richard Shilling**. Shilling creates works of art from natural materials, which he photographs in natural locations. **Take some time to observe some of his works of art with your child here:**

<https://www.richardshilling.co.uk/>



After viewing some of his art, let your older child collect materials outdoors and let them experiment with them. Let them stack rocks, thread old leaves on sticks, create shapes with sticks, or use the ground/mud to make things stand more upright. Younger children can also participate- although their work will quickly change (and most likely be very brief). The littlest of explorers can enjoy the natural objects with you- see what you yourself can make and share with your little one. There's no wrong way to create!

## Art Using Natural Materials Indoors

Go for a walk with your child and gather a variety of natural materials: stones, sticks, grasses, leaves, pinecones, or anything else (*preferably not alive*) that sparks their interest. Older children can be in charge of their own Ziploc bag of treasures while younger could get a helping hand from a family member. If you find a natural object that could be appealing to an infant, you can let them hold the object and describe it to them (“Look at this big brown leaf!”).

### What Can We Do Now?

*Here are a few of projects in your home that you can do with materials collected from the outdoors. There are many more ideas than these around, so feel free to do your own investigating or experimenting!*



**Natural Paintbrushes:** You can either leave materials whole (such as strong grasses or little branches with leaves/needles on them) or you can make your own paintbrushes! Just take your material of choice (grass, leaves, pinecones, needles, etc.) and use either a rubber band or string to attach it to the top of a stick.



**Rubbings:** Have your child place some of their found objects under a piece of paper and use a crayon to rub sideways on top of the paper. Children might have more success if the paper is taped down onto the table.



**Collage:** Offer your child the collection of materials they've collected with some paper and glue (toddlers may have the most success gluing with paintbrushes). Allow them to experiment and see what they can create! Some children may also be interested in adding additional elements to their art using a more comfortable art utensil, such as marker or crayon.



**Rock Painting:** An easy project that just needs rocks, paint, and brushes. Younger children will have the most success with bigger rocks- but will need your help to carry them. Try a variety of different sized brushes! *[If you have a very large rock outdoors and the weather is warm enough, you can also paint on it using water instead of paint.]*



**Playdough:** Add natural materials to your child's playdough experience! They can make imprints or use them as tools for cutting, poking, or expanding their dramatic play. Let them explore!

**Contact/Wax Paper Art:** This project has a few variations, depending on what supplies you have at home. You can also create frames for both variations using paper plates/cardboard when done, or leave them as-is.



**Contact Paper**

Cut a piece of contact paper to the size you would like. Peel off the adhesive and tape the contact paper down with the sticky side up. Allow your child to add the natural materials they would like. When finished, you can either place another contact sheet over the finished project or stick the adhesive side to something else, such as the window or wall.



**Wax Paper**

Cut a piece of wax paper to the size you would like and lay it **wax side up**. *[If you're not sure, touch both sides of the paper: one side will feel waxy and the other will feel smooth.]* Let your child position their natural materials where they would like them to be. When completed, take another wax paper piece and place it over the top with the **wax side down**. {Adult} Use a warm iron to seal the sheets together. *If you are concerned that wax could get on your iron, put some parchment/baking paper on top first.*