

Branching Art From Nature



Chicago Children's Museum

at Navy Pier

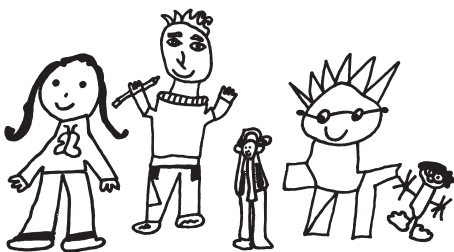
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Kraft Artabounds Studio



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Using the same old art supplies, week after week, can become monotonous. Consider foregoing the paint, crayons, construction paper, and other store-bought supplies, and embarking instead on a natural-supply hunt with your child. You can use materials you find outside to create original works of art—and engage your child in the fascinating process of discovery!

Collect objects that interest your child.

Bring a bucket, grocery bag, or other container to collect items—nuts, sticks, flower petals, leaves, stones, and seashells, to name a few—as you walk outside. Let your child's interests guide the activity.

Watch them organize.

Suggest that your child sort the objects into groups, organizing by color, shape, size, or other desired characteristic. Provide containers for storing. Clear containers are best for easy viewing, but any recycled container will do.

Explore and design.

Offer children a special space to arrange their found objects into unique patterns and random compositions. Place colored paper or a flat shape on a table to use as a work base.

Create a natural rock garden.

Fill a shallow container with sand or small pebbles, and invite your child to dig in! Dampening the sand will make it more moldable. You can also try this on a larger scale, such as in a backyard garden plot or on the beach.

Construct a nature collage.

Collages can be made with natural objects, glue, paper, or other base materials, such as cereal-box cardboard. Before gluing, have your children compose their objects on the paper. Next, using liquid glue and a cotton swab, they can affix their items to create a lasting piece of art. Children may opt for abstract arrangements or representations of things that interest them—including themselves. Just provide a mirror, and see which natural objects they select to create “self-portraits”!

Bring a tree branch to life.

Tree branches can be transformed into three-dimensional masterpieces. To get started, look for fallen tree branches and remove unwanted or unsafe parts, and then let your child's imagination take over. Provide masking tape, colorful yarn, paint, glue, and other materials that your child can combine with natural objects to create imaginative characters, vibrant mobiles, or colorful sculptures that will beautify any space.