



Cross-curricular
Age 4-11

Make a yucca leaf paintbrush

- Making tools and items using natural materials



Learning
through
Landscapes

Overview

- This activity uses stones as tools to make leaf paintbrushes. These techniques and materials, used by Pueblo people to make paintbrushes for decorating their pots, will give pupils a practical glimpse into Pueblo culture and history.

Learning outcomes

- To make and use a functional paintbrush using simple techniques and tools.
- To consider modifications to improve the functionality of the brushes.

Equipment

- Yucca leaves
- Scissors or secateurs
- Selection of medium-size pebbles
- Small stones to use as scrapers
- Paint
- Surfaces for painting outdoors (e.g. wooden pallets, cardboard boxes)

Activity

1. Cut a 10cm section of yucca leaf for each pupil to make their paintbrush from. The thicker portion near where the leaf joins the plant is ideal.
2. Using a smooth surface (e.g. the playground), ask pupils to use pebbles to hammer one end of their leaf to expose its inner fibres. These will be the bristles of the paintbrush.
3. When the fibres are exposed, instruct pupils to clean off any remaining pulp using a scraper stone.
4. Encourage pupils to test their brushes by using them to create simple patterns with paint.

5. Finer brushes can be created by splitting the leaf section lengthways before or after exposing the fibres. Can the pupils think of any other modifications?

Further activities

Art and design	Using a range of materials	Use the yucca brushes to paint designs onto line drawings of Pueblo style pots
History	Non-European societies	Explore the importance of yucca plants to Pueblo peoples and try out other uses of yucca (e.g. making liquid soap)
Geography	Human and physical geography	Investigate where yucca leaves grow, the climate they need, and where Pueblo communities were established
Health and wellbeing	Connection with nature	Experiment with other natural materials in the school grounds to make paintbrushes and other simple tools and items

If you would like to develop your outdoor learning knowledge and skills, take a look at our range of training courses: l.tl.org.uk/outdoor-learning-training