

Cut Paper Nature Collage

Some of the best shapes are found in nature. Using ABG's trailside garden plants and Matisse's cut paper collages as inspiration we will abstract plant forms using painted papers or found papers. If you need help thinking of ideas you can utilize the *Trailside Garden Images*, *Plant Shape Templates* handouts or the *Useful Resources* links on Matisse at the bottom of this page.

1. Use gouache, acrylic or watercolor and paint several pieces of paper a range of different solid colors. Let the papers dry. (You can also use colored construction paper, found papers like mail, maps, newspapers, recycled papers, magazines, whatever you have lying about). Matisse sometimes used plain white paper on a colored background. Occasionally, he drew patterns on the white paper in black before cutting out shapes.
2. Look at real plants or photos of plants (see *Trailside Garden images*) for inspiration. Use scissors to cut out plant shapes. You can draw the plant shapes first with a pencil, or you can free cut the shapes with the scissors. Plants found in your own garden, seen on neighborhood walks or trails, or indoor plants may also be an excellent resource.
3. Matisse loved to save his scraps from his cut-outs and use them in his artwork. The cut-out shape is called a **positive shape**, and the scrap that has the hole in the paper is called the **negative shape**. Artists use both positive and negative shapes in their work to create interesting spatial relationships in an image.
4. Think about using large and small shapes, skinny and wide shapes, long and short shapes. Think about placing colors next to their complement or opposite on the color wheel to create harmonious color relationships.
5. You could also create a mirror image of a shape by flipping it over and having the positive shape line up with the edge of the negative shape. Before you commit to anything as a design, move the papers around and try out several different combinations of shapes or colors until you find an arrangement you like.
6. Pin your shapes to a wall in your house like Matisse did, bringing the outside garden inside. Or glue your cut-out shapes to a larger piece of paper or colored background.
7. Consider also cutting out some animal shapes, maybe add a robin, bee, or squirrel to your design. See the *Plant and Animal Shapes* handouts if you are having trouble thinking of designs and need some ideas.
8. Lastly think about making **abstract** shapes. These plant cut-outs do not need to be exact copies from life. You can think about simplifying a shape, making it minimal, or exaggerating a shape. Abstract shapes to create a symbolic "concept" of a plant.

Mother's Day Card / Framed Artwork

Another activity would be to create a **Mother's Day** Card or Framed Artwork using your cut paper nature collage. Turn your collage into a card by gluing it to a folded piece of paper, or make a paper frame and support the USPS by mailing it to someone you love!

Artist

Henri Matisse

French, 1869-1954

Matisse was an early 20th Century painter, sculptor, draftsman, and printmaker. He is well known for his bold colors and simplified essential forms. Born in 1869 in northern France early inspiration came from many generations of weavers and luxury fabrics in his home town. He was considered a rival of Picasso and is also known for his "cut-outs", using only painted papers and scissors to create collages using imagery found in nature. In the late 1940's he began working almost exclusively with cut paper and scissors to create amazing artworks that focus on color, contrast and economy of means. More information on Matisse as well as images of his work and recordings of curators discussing his work can be found at the resource links below.

Useful Resources

1. MoMA. "Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs." *MoMa*, www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2014/matisse/in-the-studio.html
2. "Henri Matisse": The Cut-Outs: MoMa." *The Museum of Modern Art*, www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1429