

# TOP DRAW

DRAWING AUSSIE FLORA

## FURTHER DESIGN ACTIVITIES



*lino prints by Patrick Clarke, Jarrod Koch, Katie Jayne O'Brien, Zac Elliot and Sadie Grant Butler*

### *Printmaking and Illustration*

Printmaking has always been a very important part of botanical drawing. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, botanical artists who discovered and drew species in the newly discovered areas of the world needed to find a way of reproducing their drawings to appear in books. In this way, other botanists, scholars, patrons who paid for the explorations and institutions which collected information could find out about the plants in different parts of the world and compare them with other specimens in order to classify them.



Australian Government

Australian National Botanic Gardens

One way of producing these prints was by engravings. Engravers were important artisans who copied the artists' work onto wooden blocks or metal plates. These plates could then be printed off as many times as desired.

Ferdinand Bauer is a famous botanical artist who accompanied Matthew Flinders' circumnavigation of Australia in 1801–1803 on the Investigator. He was remarkable not only because he was a botanical artist but also because he engraved his own drawings when he returned to London.

Today we can use the computer to scan not only botanical drawings but also actual plant matter.

One of the simplest forms of hand printmaking used in schools today is the lino print. Although it is not possible to reproduce fine detail with a lino print, nevertheless it is a very striking medium as can be seen by the work of Australian artists Margaret Preston and Bruce Gould.

### Some things to do

- Photocopy some different leaves. Change the settings on the machine to make different effects.



*photocopy of wattle*

- Using printing ink or dilute paints and a roller, ink up one leaf carefully and use it to print with.



*print of eucalypt leaf*

- Find out how to do lino prints and design a botanically inspired image to draw onto the lino. When you have cut and printed the lino you could use the prints to make cards for your friends and your family.
- Find out how lithography, screenprinting and photography can be used in botanical art.

## Pattern making with botanical studies

People have always been interested in decorating the objects they use every day. Throughout history, plants have commonly provided inspiration for these decorations. Fabrics, ceramics, boxes, jewellery, furniture, buildings — all these often have plant patterns as their decoration. Can you find three different things at home that show this?

Patterns are like music. Shapes or motifs repeat themselves like musical notes and depending on the arrangement, you get different tunes ..... *la de la de la or de de laa de de laa or even da lalalaa da lalalaa da lalalaa*. You try to make another one.



Tropical Forest design by Taryn Bevege

### Something to draw

Here is how you can design a simple pattern. This can be photocopied to get the full effect.

*First, make a motif:*

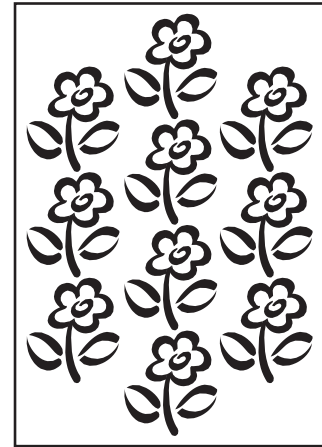
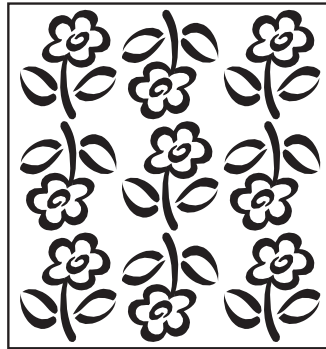
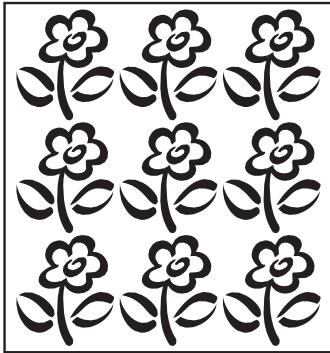
- 1 Draw some plants or parts of plants like leaves and flowers, using a fine, black felt tip pen and using simple lines, shapes and textures.
- 2 Use some of these drawings to design a simple bouquet, a fantasy tree or any other plant motif on a piece of A5 paper. You can trace the original drawings or photocopy them and cut them out to make the design. You can use a drawing more than once and by turning it upside down or the wrong way round you can make it look different ... yet the same.

- 3 Look at the motif carefully and choose some areas to fill in with black, with stripy or dotty patterns and textures where appropriate.

*Second, make a pattern:*

- 4 Photocopy your motif nine times. Cut each motif out carefully and arrange them all on a larger piece of paper in a regular way.

Here are some arrangements to get you started.



### Something to do

Collect twelve eucalypt leaves and twelve of another sort of leaf and arrange them in a pattern on a piece of coloured card. Remember, a pattern must have a regular order.

### Painting plants

Why not have some fun with colours first?

- The three primary colours are red, yellow and blue.
  - What makes them 'primary'? (They cannot be created by mixing other colours together. Try it — see if you can make yellow from other colours.)
- Secondary colours are the ones you get when you mix two primary colours together. Experiment in these boxes:



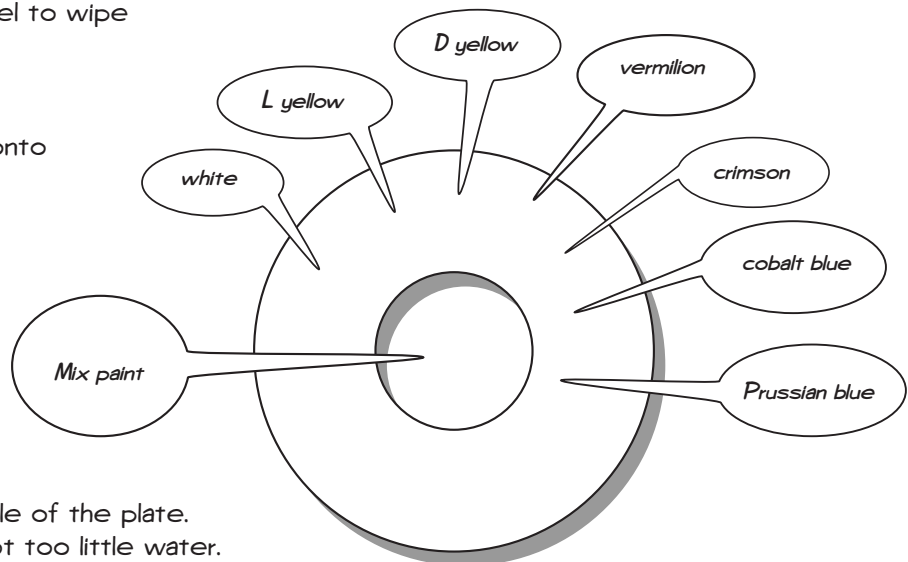
- Tertiary colours are the ones you get when you mix together secondary colours. How many can you find?
- Find out how a colour wheel works.

Now look at a leaf and count how many colours you can see in that one leaf. Now compare these colours with another leaf. Can you mix and match some of these colours?

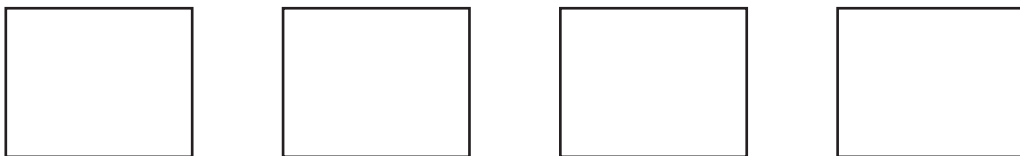
### Equipment

- gouache paints — white, lemon yellow, deep yellow, vermillion, crimson, cobalt blue, Prussian blue.
- no. 4 sable brush
- white dinner plate and some water in a jar
- white paper
- a piece of kitchen towel to wipe the brush

Squeeze out your paints onto the plate in this order.



- 1 Mix colours in the middle of the plate. Not too much water, not too little water. Just enough to give you a smooth and opaque line.
- 2 Practise using your brush. You could try writing your name very small, using the tip of your brush.
- 3 Choose a leaf and see if you can find four different colours or shades in it to mix. Mix each colour carefully and paint it on to the matching part of the plant to see if it is the same colour.
- 4 Fill these rectangles with the four colours you have made.



### Painting the leaf

- 5 Draw the outline of a leaf and its veins in paint using only the tip of your brush and very light, watery paint.
- 6 Correct the leaf shape and veins with slightly darker paint where you think you could make it more exact.
- 7 Paint in the leaf slowly and precisely, using at least four different shades or colours that you can see on the actual leaf.

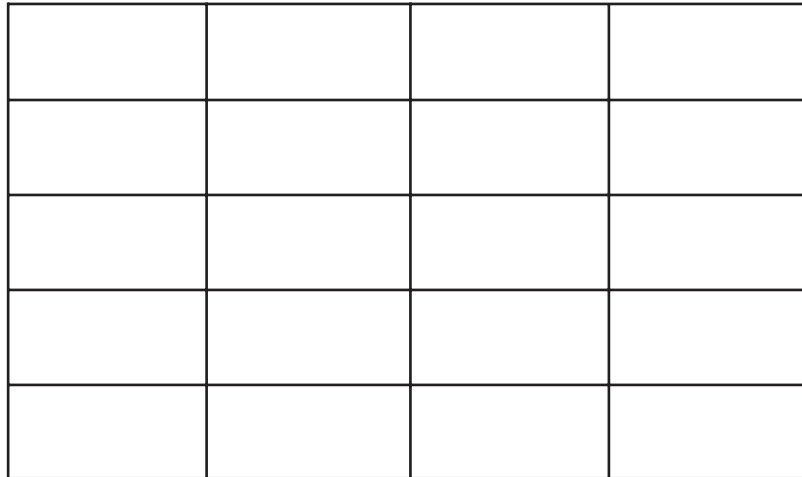
Don't just paint the leaf in one colour and then add the other colours. The more colours you find, the more exciting your painting will be.

## Painting by Numbers

Ferdinand Bauer, the botanical artist, used to have a colour grid of about a thousand colours, all numbered, so that when he drew plants and didn't have time to paint them on the spot, he just found the colour on the grid and put in a number instead.

This technique is still used today, especially in the field where large numbers of plants (which do not last long!) are collected. Artists use field sketches and pressed specimens plus their colour charts to reproduce the live specimens.

## Something to paint



Take a walk outside and find different scraps of nature that show lots of different colours. Choose them for interesting colours. Select twenty colours you like; try and mix them exactly, and then carefully paint each of these rectangles in a different colour.

Choose some colours from your grid to colour in the design below. If you want, you could repeat the exercise with other colours and see how you can produce a different effect.

## A few interesting references

Clarke, Ian & Lee, Helen (1987) *Name That Flower: the Identification of Flowering Plants*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

Hewson, Helen (1999) *300 Years of Botanical Illustration*. CSIRO Publishing

Watts, Peter, Pomfrett, Joanne & Mabberley, David (1997) *An Exquisite Eye, The Australian Flora & Fauna Drawings 1801-1820 of Ferdinand Bauer*. Historic Houses of NSW.

