

# ART IN THE PARK GUIDE

## BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION

Grab your sketchbook and drawing supplies or whatever materials you have at home and get outside! look closely at the plants and flowers in the park, garden, or in your own backyard then try preserving them on paper by sketching, painting, and drawing what you see!



### Seeing Like an Artist

Artists have keen observational skills and are great at noticing shapes, colors, textures, and patterns. Plants are patient subjects made up of many repetitive geometric and organic shapes. They are composed of some basic parts and once you notice them, you can record what you see in a piece by piece way.

### Consider the following:

- **Gesture** - You may not have the time for a detailed drawing, but you can capture the lines and shapes that stand out most. Japanese ink paintings are a great reference for capturing the most elemental images of plants like bamboo.
- **Form** - What's the general shape of your subject and can it be broken down into multiple smaller shapes to make sketching simpler? For example, a sunflower is a circle within a circle. The outermost ring is composed of repeating diamond shaped petals while the inner circle holds concentric rows of seeds.
- **Detail** - Plants and flowers can be overwhelming in their detail! Your job as an artist is to choose what parts you want to draw the most attention to and what you want to describe more generally or just leave out all together. If an entire tree is overwhelming, just draw one leaf.
- **Context** - Botanical illustrators typically notate their drawings with information such as the plant's name, location, and even measurements to show the scale of their drawings v.s. the actual size of their plant. You may want to add personal field notes to reference later.
- **Broadening your perspective** - Remember that the process of close-looking is just as important and beneficial as creating a beautiful drawing. Even if your drawing doesn't come out the way you expected, you will have practiced other skills in the process such as attention, perception, interpretation, creative thinking, and appreciation. [For more inspiration linking art and science, check out this article on scientific illustrator Alice Tangerini!](#)