Painting With Soil

Teaching Objective:

"To have fun and to gain a deeper appreciation of soils - one of our most important natural resources."

Introduction:

Soils are one of our most important natural resources. They also are important for the beauty their many colors add to our landscapes. Most of us overlook this natural beauty because we see it every day. Often these colors blend with vegetation, sky, water, etc. Soil colors serve as pigments in bricks, pottery and art work.

The color and texture of soil painting is fascinating and a creative opportunity for all ages of students.

Materials:

Soil (dried in air)
Hammer/mallet
Mortar and pestle (rubber-tipped)
Paper cub (4 oz.)
Pencils
Ink pens (black, different tip sizes)
Paint brushes (different kinds and sizes)
Artist acrylic (clear gloss medium)
Sponges and rags
Water color paper
Masking tape

Procedure:

Soils

1. Gather many colors of soil.
2. Place dried soil on a piece of paper and crush into pieces with hammer or mallet. (Figure, step 1a)
3. Place some of the crushed soil into a mortar. Use a rubber-tipped pestle to crush the soil into a fine powder. Repeat to crush all of the different colored soils. (Figure, step 1b)
4. Place some powdered soil in a paper cup. Wrap a knee high hose over the top 2 or 3 times. Turn cup upside down over a piece of paper and gently shake out finely powdered soil.
5. Place the different soils in paper cups - notice the colors and textures.

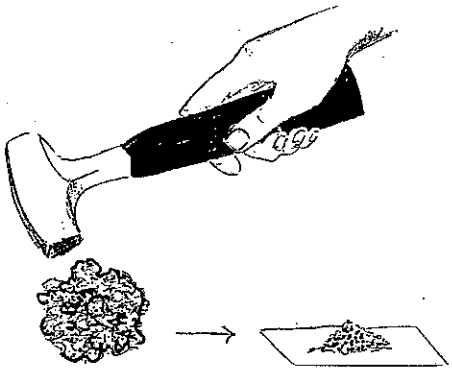
Artwork

1. Lightly sketch art work on water color paper with pencil. When satisfied with composition use ink for permanent lines.
2. With masking tape, carefully tape paper edges to table or board. This is done so that the artwork will dry flat.
3. Pour small amount of artist acrylic in small paper cups. Add small amounts of finely powdered soil. You may also want to add a few drops of water to the soil mix.
4. Experiment with depth of color and mixing the different soils.
5. Use different sizes and kinds of paint brushes, sponges and rags. Experiment and have fun.
6. Layering the colors. When your art work is dry, you may want to apply another layer of soil paint.
7. You may want to use a black ink pen to make finishing touches on your art work.

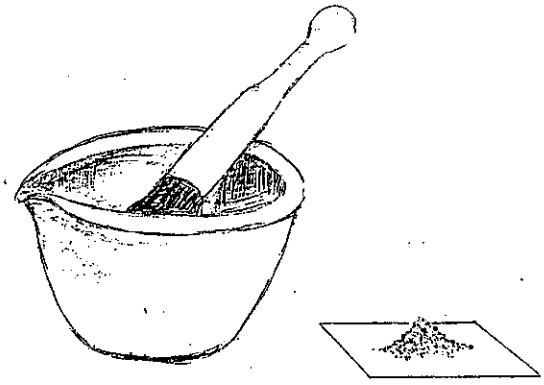
Activity Time:

The estimated time is about 1 or 2 hours.

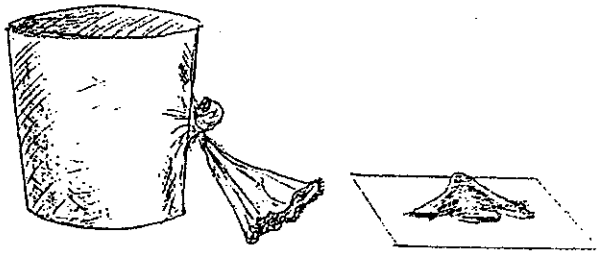
Soil Crayons Activity Continued



Step 1a. Crushing soil



Step 1b. Grinding soil



Step 1c. Sieving soil

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Jan was born in Hawarden, Iowa. She is married and has two sons. When her youngest son started preschool, she went back to school also and received a degree in Environmental Laboratory Technology at Southeast Community College, Lincoln, Nebraska. She was hired by the Soil Conservation Service (now NRCS) over 14 years ago as a physical science technician at the National Soil Survey Laboratory.

She has always loved drawing and painting, but never seemed to have the time to indulge. She has really enjoyed the opportunity to work with the Lewis and Clark soil-art project.