

# Painting with Soil

**Credit to: Janis Lang, Physical Science Technician  
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**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 and pottery. If you look at the works of many of the great artists, you will notice that “earth colors” are dominant. The color and texture of soil painting is fascinating and a creative opportunity for all ages of students.

## **Materials**

soil (dried in air)  
hammer or mallet  
mortar and pestle (rubber-tipped)  
paper cups (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 soils of various colors.
2. Place each dried soil sample on a piece of paper and crush into pieces with hammer or mallet.
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.
4. Place some powdered soil in a paper cup. Wrap a knee high hose over the top 2-3 times. Turn the 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 a 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 art work will dry flat.
3. Pour small amounts 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 colors. When your art work is dry, you may apply another layer of soil paint.
7. You may want to use a black ink pen to make finishing touches on your artwork.

## **Activity Time**

The estimated time is about 1-2 hours.