Leaf and Bark Rubbing

Leaf Rubbing: Leaf rubbing is a popular activity that can help you learn about the different shapes and veining patterns of tree leaves. It's easy and fun!

What you will need

- Paper (newsprint or copier paper)
- Crayons with their paper removed
- Masking tape (optional)
- A leaf - best picked up off the ground

How to make your leaf rubbing

Place your leaf on a flat surface with the vein side up. Like our veins, the veins in a leaf carry tree blood (sap) to and from the leaf. And like our bones, the veins provide a framework to hold the leaf open flat so it can collect a lot of sunlight. Place a piece of paper over the leaf. You can use masking tape to hold the paper in place, or just hold it down with your hand.

Use the side of your crayon to rub over the paper. You’ll see the outline of the leaf and the pattern of the veins on the paper. Try experimenting by pressing hard and soft on the paper. After you're finished, try moving the paper a little bit and using another color for a cool effect.

Bark Rubbing: Have you ever looked closely at the bark of a tree? Just like leaves, different types of trees have different kinds of bark. Some bark is chunky like popcorn, while other bark is smooth or pebbly. Some trees have deep ridges running up and down the trunk. Still others have lines that encircle the trunk. And some bark patterns change as the tree ages! You can try bark rubbing to capture these patterns and learn more about trees.

What you will need

- Paper (newsprint or copier paper)
- Crayons with their paper removed
- Masking tape (optional)
- A tree - ideally with a width of at least 10 inches

How to make your bark rubbing

Make sure your tree is in a safe location before you begin. Place a piece of paper over the bark of your tree at a comfortable height for working. You can use the masking tape to hold the paper in place. Use the side of your crayon to rub over the paper to make a copy of the bark’s pattern on the paper. Try experimenting by pressing hard and soft on the paper. Try using different colors. Look for other trees that you can use to make a bark rubbing. See what different patterns you can find.