

THE PRACTICE OF BOTANICAL DRAWING

THE PRACTICE OF BOTANICAL DRAWING



Wendy Hollender

Botanical drawing starts with finding a subject to draw. It can be as simple as picking up a twig, or finding a seed pod that has an interesting form. You could pick a fruit or vegetable from a farmers' market, or cut a beautiful flower from a garden.

Select your subject and gather your art supply kit. Then find a comfortable place to work that has good light. I have my art supply kit packed and ready at all times for outside work or wherever else I go.

My studio at home is set up with the same art supplies so I am always ready to work. There is very little set-up and clean-up with these art supplies and they are quite compact. If need be, you can work at your kitchen table and clear it in one minute when it is dinner time.

Botanical drawing is an easy practice. The art supplies are simple, only a small number of pencils. The paper is smooth and works beautifully with pencils alone or combined with watercolor. I always use quality paper, in the end it saves time and makes a better drawing. Have an easy to use pencil sharpener that delivers a uniform sharp point quickly.

Twenty-two colored pencils are enough to create all of nature's colors. Using watercolor pencils instead of watercolor from tubes makes for ease of layering watercolor without having to switch gears to mix and test

colors. This allows you to stay "in the creative zone" as you work. Working in a spiral pad allows the continuity of creating an organized botanical sketchbook as you go. The ability to add and remove paper is an important feature for convenience and flexibility.

With a subject to draw and my art supply kit I can easily stay focused on the drawing. Start by studying the subject and ask yourself these questions:

What is the size of my subject and where will I place it on my page?

What is the simple geometric shape that this form is closest to?

Once I determine the shape I will choose the light source "formula" to give my form dimension. I also see if there are overlapping forms such as the center of a flower, petals that overlap or leaves on a stem.

The act of stroking my pencil across the paper is very relaxing and meditative. Within seconds of starting the toning stage of a drawing I can feel myself go through a change. I become calm, focused and relaxed. I have a clear direction and I will quietly build my drawing while closely studying and discovering the specific qualities of my subject. I am able to take delight in nature's amazing structures, patterns and colors. It never ceases to amaze me. A feeling of calm and wellbeing takes over. This alone

THE PRACTICE OF BOTANICAL DRAWING

is worth the experience. If I never went further I would be happy and fulfilled.

This is only the beginning. Once I have described the basic size, shape and light source of my subject I am ready to go deeper into the drawing. This is when the magic begins to happen.

Sometimes I imagine I am a tiny insect crawling across the planet that is my subject. When I am drawing on the shadow side, of a small tomato for example, I can feel myself climbing out of a dark valley and up an enormous hill to the light at the top of the tomato. This helps me understand the surface contour of my subject. I slowly create a seamless blend of tones to give the illusion of three dimensional form.

My tones must change from very dark to the lightest highlight that is the color of the paper in a smooth continuous manner. This gives the illusion of moving and changing form. The continuous toning allows the viewers eye to move across your form in a three dimensional way.

Working carefully, I build my layers slowly. I start adding the form's color that mixes with my tones to create a red tomato in shadow and light.

You might think this process is a quiet solitary practice that requires isolation. For me this is not so. Once I have

my basic outline drawing completed I can listen to music, a book on tape, a podcast or have a conversation with others working nearby. I focus on my slow drawing better when I am able to have my mind engaged as well. The act of drawing in this manner keeps me from daydreaming so I actually stay better focused on whatever I am listening to. It also keeps me from getting impatient with the time it takes for a drawing to complete. Studies have recently shown that doodlers actually pay attention and are more focused because they don't daydream. Feel free to listen to something while you draw.



THE PRACTICE OF BOTANICAL DRAWING

RECOMMENDED ART SUPPLIES

COLORED PENCILS: FABER-CASTELL POLYCHROMOS COLORED PENCILS

<i>Primary colors</i>		<i>Dark colors to mix for deep shades of color</i>
Cadmium yellow lemon 205		 Dark sepia 175
Cadmium yellow 107		 Dark indigo 157
Pale geranium lake 121		 Chrome oxide green 278
Middle purple pink 125		 Red violet 194
Ultramarine 120		
Cobalt turquoise 153		
		<i>Light colors for tints, highlights and burnishing</i>
		 White 101
		 Ivory 103
		 Warm grey iv 273
		<i>Earth tones</i>
		 Burnt ochre 187
		 Venetian red 190
		 Yellow ochre 183
		 Burnt sienna 283

[OPTIONAL]

FABER-CASTELL ALBRECHT DURER WATERCOLOUR PENCILS/ *These have the same color names as the Faber-Castell polychromos.*

Cadmium yellow 107		 Purple violet 136
Pale geranium lake 121		 Permanent green olive 167
Middle purple pink 125		 Dark sepia 175
Dark cadmium orange 115		 Burnt sienna 283

THE PRACTICE OF BOTANICAL DRAWING

RECOMMENDED ART SUPPLIES

PENCIL SHARPENERS: [*you don't need all three*]

Manual desktop pencil sharpener like Carl, Rodahle or Q-Connect [*portable*]

Hand held pencil sharpener/ Faber-Castell pencil sharpener in a box [*very portable*]

Electric pencil sharpener/ X-acto battery operated pencil sharpener

1 OR 2 GRAPHITE PENCILS:

H lead —I like Tombow H pencil

ERASERS:

Kneaded eraser

Tombow Mono round zero eraser

Tombow Mono colored pencil eraser

SMALL SEE-THROUGH RULER:

Westcott C-Thru ruler

SPIRAL PAD OF HOT PRESSED FABRIANO ARTISTICO WATERCOLOR PAPER:

140 lb size 8.5 x 11 inches [*can only be purchased from drawingincolor.com or drawbotanical.com*]

OR

HOT PRESSED FABRIANO ARTISTICO WATERCOLOR PAPER:

140 lb cut into 4 smaller sheets [*sheets are 22 x 30 inches*]

[*work on the side with a backward watermark*]

PRISMACOLOR VERITHIN PENCILS:

*Dark brown, *black, *gray 70%

WATERBRUSH FROM PENTEL OR MEDIUM SIZE WATERCOLOR BRUSH

FROG PRONG FLOWER HOLDER [*optional*]

MAGNIFYING GLASS

DRAFTSMEN DUSTER OR MAKE-UP BRUSH [*brush for wiping away debris*]

ERASER SHIELD

EMBOSSING TOOL FROM PERGAMANO (size 1)

RECOMMENDED TEXT:

“BOTANICAL DRAWING IN COLOR, A BASIC GUIDE TO MASTERING REALISTIC FORM AND NATURALISTIC COLOR”,
by Wendy Hollender

Art supplies available at: **WWW.DRAWINGINCOLOR.COM, WWW.DRAWBOTANICAL.COM**
AND WWW.DICKBLICK.COM

THE PRACTICE OF BOTANICAL DRAWING

STEPS FOR DRAWING A SUBJECT

Choose your subject first. Always draw from a real specimen.

{DO NOT DRAW FROM MY ARTWORK OR PHOTOGRAPHS}

STEP 1

- With a *graphite pencil* lightly draw your form making it life-size.
- Start with a center axis line.
- Measure with a *see-through ruler* as needed.
- Put your graphite pencil away. Never tone with your graphite pencil.

STEP 2

- Decide on your light source: upper left or upper right lighting? Draw a small thumbnail sketch of the geometric form closest to your subject with this correct light source model.
- Decide on placement of highlight and very lightly outline it with a *graphite pencil* so you can erase the placement lines later.

STEP 3

- Using a dark colored pencil such as *dark sepia* start to add tone to your form by first defining the overlapping areas.
- Do this by lightly toning behind the form in front.
- Continue adding tone with the *dark sepia pencil* toning light to dark to define the three-dimensional surface of the form with a consistent light source.
- Build your tones slowly making sure to achieve a complete range of tones from light to dark. The lightest tone is the color of the paper.
- Remember, in the beginning rendering three-dimensional form and structure with correct tones is more important than the local color of your subject.

STEP 4

- Do some color blends to choose the colors needed to describe your subject's local or dominant colors.
- Create a practice arc tone bar with tones and colors that will show the color variations with all of the tones from light to dark.
- Start to use *colored pencils* choosing those close to the form's dominant color and layer color on top of the *dark sepia*. At this stage, also do a layer of watercolor using a *watercolor pencil* in the main or local color of your subject.
- Always let the watercolor dry before continuing.

STEP 5

- Keep working between colors and darker tones. Consider adding a reflective highlight if desired and start to *burnish*.

STEP 6

- Any highlights should be left the color of the paper and later can be developed with lighter tones and colors, filled in as needed so the highlight doesn't look like an empty spot but instead a shimmering light.
- Sharpen edges, add details and add more darks as needed.

THE PRACTICE OF BOTANICAL DRAWING

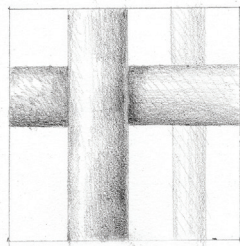
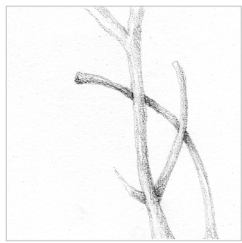
DEFINITIONS

TONE OR VALUE: How light or dark a color appears.

UPPER LEFT LIGHT SOURCE: Your set-up or imagined light source is always from the left or right, from over your shoulder lighting the front of your subject as you are looking at it. The light hits the subject at a 45 degree angle. Approximately a third of your subject is in shadow, and two thirds is illuminated.

THUMBNAIL SKETCH: A simple geometric drawing of your subject. This quick small drawing is a reminder of how the light is illuminating your subject so you know where to put the shadow side, the mid-tones and the highlight.

OVERLAPPING: Describes where forms intersect or are on top of each other, defining foreground and background. Understanding this concept is crucial for creating three dimensional complex forms. Overlapping gives the feeling of space, depth, and structure.



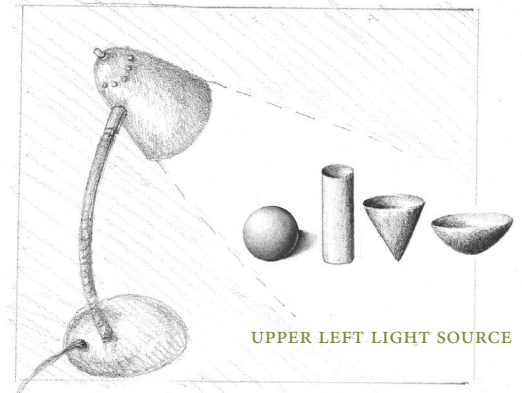
OVERLAPPING

CAST SHADOW: A shadow is not a form so it should be extremely subtle. It should be darkest next to the edge of the shape that is casting the shadow. Shadows gradate from dark to very light and should not end in a sharp line but should fade away into the color of the paper.

REFLECTIVE HIGHLIGHTS: A reflective highlight differentiates between two overlapping forms or separates a form from a cast shadow. The reflective highlight should not be as light in value as a highlight. It should be very subtle, at a value of 4 or 5.

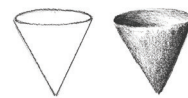
LOCAL OR DOMINANT COLOR: The overall majority color of your subject.

BURNISHING: Blending colors for a smooth finish.

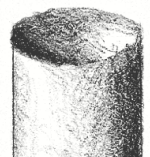


SPHERE

CUP



CONE



CYLINDER



CAST SHADOW



REFLECTIVE HIGHLIGHT

THE PRACTICE OF BOTANICAL DRAWING

EVALUATE THE COMPONENTS OF A DRAWING

- SIZE:** Is the drawing accurate in size, proportion, and perspective?
- STRUCTURE:** Does the drawing show an accurate structure of the subject?
- OVERLAPPING AREAS:** Are overlapping areas of the subject clear? Is it obvious what is in front and what is behind? Is there a defining dark shadow on the surface of the subject that is underneath or behind the subjects in the foreground?
- LIGHT SOURCE:** Is the light source illuminating the front of the subject appearing to come from the left or right?
- TONES:** Is there a complete range of 9–10 tones from light to dark? Do the tones graduate and blend seamlessly on the form?
- COLOR:** Are the colors accurate? Is there a complete range of 9–10 tones maintained in color?
- HIGHLIGHT:** Is the highlight in the correct location? Is there a shimmer to the highlight, not an empty space?
- REFLECTIVE HIGHLIGHT:** Is the reflective highlight believable, not appearing as empty space?
- CAST SHADOW:** Does the cast shadow stay in the background and push the subject forward in space? Does the shadow have soft edges? Do the shadow's tones graduate from very dark to very light so that the lightest tone fades into the paper?
- DETAILS:** Are the drawing's details believable and not overshadowing the subject?
- EDGES AND CONTOUR:** Are the edges of the subject sharp without creating a dark outline? Does the drawing appear to be “in focus”? Nature usually has subtle curves, rather than sharp angles. This becomes more apparent when drawing flower petals. Is the contour of the drawing graceful without too many sharp angles?
- COMPOSITION:** Is the layout, placement, and location of the subject visually comfortable on the page? Is there a clear focal point?