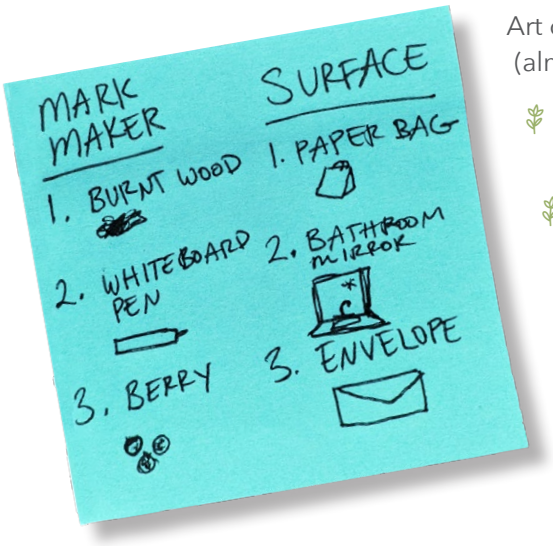
Elizabeth Kubey
Photo: Jisoo Kim

New decade, new art!

BY ELIZABETH KUBEY AND LESLEY GOREN

As we welcome a new year – and a new decade – my artist friend Lesley Goren and I want you to add more art to your life. We offer you a challenge to make **one native plant-inspired art piece every day for two weeks**. The goal is to have fun and experiment; there is no right or wrong way to make art. Sometimes it is about capturing the exact features, but sometimes it about how these plants make you feel!



Art can range from abstract (doesn't look like the thing at all) to highly-detailed (almost like a photo). Here are a couple of terms to know:

- **Botanical art:** Art that features plants. The focus may be on creating a beautiful or interesting image.
- **Botanical illustration:** Lifelike images that can be used as a scientific record. They have botanically accurate form, color, and details of plants.

Art Brainstorm

Let's think about what we need to make art. You can keep it simple by using and re-using the back of a piece of paper and a pencil. But what else can you use to make marks on a surface? Brainstorm three types of "mark-makers" you can use instead of a pencil, and three surfaces you can draw on instead of a standard piece of paper.

Above are some materials I want to try. *If drawing on anything you don't own, make sure you have permission! Whiteboard pens on a mirror do come off pretty easily though.*

Challenges:

- Think of mark-makers that make really thick or thin lines.
- Try using your fingers to paint.
- For surfaces, draw on existing materials to "upcycle" them (examples: old magazines, newspaper, or mail.) Your art can interact with existing pictures and text.

Photo of Elizabeth trying to blend in with *La Gerbe* by Matisse (below) and her valley oak art inspired by the piece (left).

Inspired Art:

There are so many amazing plant artists today, even just in California. One way artists develop their own style is by studying other artists. For this exercise, go to your local library's art section or to an art museum.

- ✔ Find three artists who have really different styles (realistic, used for scientific study, loose watercolors, or very graphic and bold).
- ✔ Try making art like the artists. You do not need watercolors to make a watercolor style. The main idea is it creates a different mood, movement, and energy in your art.

Drawing Exercises:

Use these activities to get creative!

From real life:

1. Place part of a plant on your surface and use dots to outline and make the drawing true to size.
2. Try drawing your plant for one minute, another for five, and one for 10.
3. Draw your plant without ever looking at your hand. It might look funky, but that's cool in art!

3 Not looking at the paper helped make this super cool drawing.

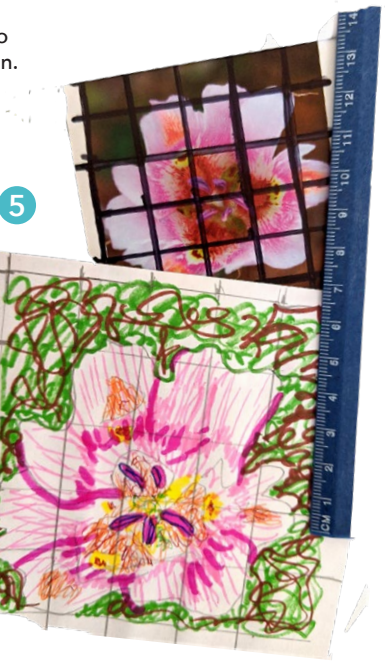
1 Dots trace this flannel bush seedpod.

2 Added shadow details to the five-minute version.

From a photo:

4. Try turning the photo upside-down to focus on the shape – not what you think the plant looks like.
5. Draw a grid on your photo and a grid on your surface. You'll want to use a ruler to make squares. Again, focus on the shape you see in each grid square. You can paint over the lines or erase them once you have your outline.
6. Draw on the photo or add your own text using block letters or cursive to express your feelings.

4 Drawing of Amy Patten's photo of a Humboldt lily upside down.



5 Gridlines helped this mariposa lily drawing based on Nick Jensen's photo come to life.

6 Added smiley faces, music, and swirls to this fiddleneck photo by Keir Morse.

Share Your Art as an Exhibit!

Use blue painter's tape to make a gallery wall. Invite your friends and family over to see your new art!

With the help of an adult, post your artwork on social media and tag @californianativeplantsociety or email ekubey@cnps.org.