

Faux Papyrus Paper

This project creates sheets of papyrus-like paper that can be used for painting or brush calligraphy. It follows the Egyptian method closely with one main exception: Rhubarb!

Materials:

10-12 Rhubarb stalks

12 inch squares of old T-shirt cloth or Handi-Wipes

Newspapers

Rubber mallet

Potato peeler

Paper towels

Weights such as books, bricks, or patio stones

If using this lesson with children, remove the leaves first, since they are poisonous.

1. The first thing you need to do is wash the rhubarb and peel off the outside skin from the rhubarb stalks. Using the potato peeler works great for this.
2. Lay the rhubarb on the edge of a table curved side up. Using the edge of the table allows you to hold the peeler perpendicular to the table, while giving the rhubarb support for evenly peeled strips.
3. Carefully pat the strips dry with a paper towel and set them aside.
4. Lay a stack of papers on the table and place a couple pieces of T-shirt cloth or a folded Handi-Wipe on top.
5. Line up several strips of rhubarb on top of this, overlapping each strip 1/8".
6. Place another layer of strips on top at right angles to the first layer; once again overlap the strips 1/8" (rhubarb strips can also be woven together for a unique variation).
7. Place another couple pieces of T-shirt cloth or a folded Handi-Wipe over the Rhubarb.
8. Using a rubber mallet, gently hammer the cloths. This will force the liquid from the rhubarb and flatten the fibers. Lift the cloth gently to check your progress. If some fibers separate gently move them back into place. Hammer more if needed, until the fibers appear to be uniformly flattened. If the rhubarb seems overly wet you might need to replace the wet newspapers.
9. Carefully pick up the cloths with the rhubarb inside and place them on a dry stack of newspapers. Place another stack of papers on top of the cloths. If you have more than one sheet of papyrus, you can add more paper and the next set of cloths, etc.
10. Stack your weights on top of the newspapers for about an hour. At that time start a new stack of dry newspapers and systematically move your project to the set of dry newspapers. The used papers can be set out to dry, so they can be used again later. The time between replacing papers will lengthen, as the sheets become dry. Plan on keeping the sheets drying for at least a day. Humidity from a rainy day can lengthen this process!
11. Remove the cloths and gently separate them to remove your "papyrus" sheets.
12. Let the sheets air dry overnight. The papyrus can be ironed on a very low setting to flatten any edges that might curl.
13. The dry sheets can now be used for various projects. Try painting on them or using brush calligraphy!

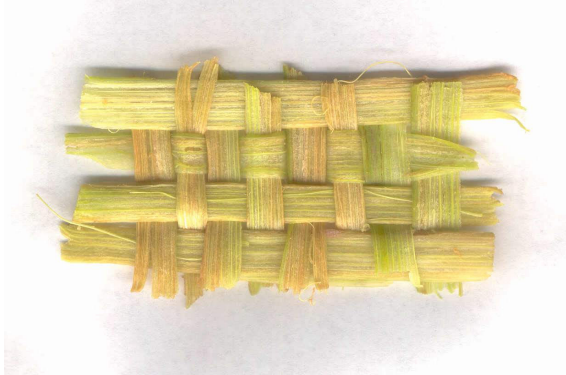
14. The following pictures are examples created using this lesson plan.



strips layered at 45 degrees



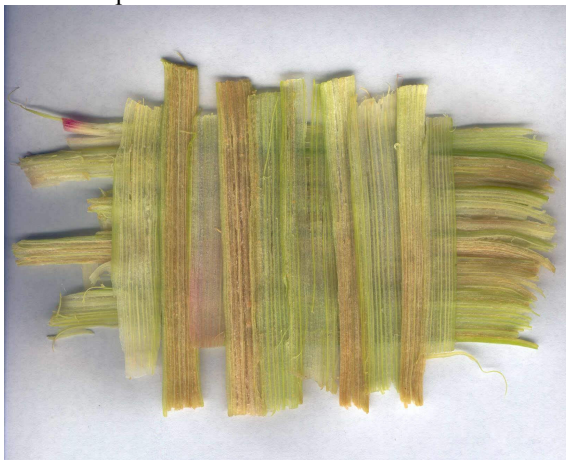
strips layered at 45 degrees with light shining through



woven strips



dried woven strips



strips layered at 45 degrees



layers in only one direction, dried and ready to paint