

Faux Papyrus Paper

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

Materials:

10-12 Stalks Rhubarb

Felt or cheesecloth

C-Clamps

2 small sheets of Plywood

Weights such as books, bricks, patio blocks

If using this lesson with children be sure to remove the leaves first since they are poisonous.

1. The first thing you must do is peel off the outside skin from the rhubarb stalks. Next you need to peel off strips as wide as the rhubarb (about 1/2"), and as thin as cardboard (1/8"). A vegetable peeler with a wide cut works well. Lay the strips out to dry.
2. Place a couching cloth such as a piece of felt or cheesecloth on a stack of newspapers.
3. Line up several strips of peeled rhubarb overlapping each strip by 1/8".
4. Place another layer of strips on top and at right angles to the first layer; once again overlap the strips by 1/8".
5. Place another couching cloth on top of the two layers of strips and roll out the combined layers with a rolling pin in even motions. Try to use a smooth marble rolling pin if you can. It seems to produce the best results.
6. Pick up the 'sandwich' gently and lay it on another stack of newspapers.
7. Continue this process of laying down two layers of strips to make sheets, one sheet of strips on top of another-up to about ten sheets.
8. Clamp the combined layers between two wood boards with C-clamps. If you are only making one or two sheets you can use large binder clips.
9. Place weights on the boards. You can use heavy books or bricks for an hour or two. Patio blocks work great for this step.
10. Uncover the top felt piece from each sheet, and dry the sheets in the sun. The sheets will curl up because of the crossing fibers as they dry. Once they're completely dry use an old iron and iron them gently and on a very low setting.
11. Use the dry sheets for calligraphy or painting.