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Creating a Botanical Study Sheet: a process of discovery and sharing

Process

- research and observations
- selecting the palette
- drawings, preliminary and refined
- arranging a composition with drawings, color, annotation
- transfer to watercolor paper
- finishing in graphite and watercolor

Materials (These are what I use. Adapt to your own purposes and preference.)

140 lb hot press white watercolor paper, 12"x16" or larger

tracing paper the same size, plus a smaller tablet if you like for individual drawings

tools for graphite drawing:

- pencils or lead-holders in HB or B, H and 2H
- a white stick eraser such as Tombow Mono Zero
- a kneadable eraser for lifting

dividers or small clear ruler, preferably metric

magnifying glass or lens

scissors

removable tape

light box

brushes:

Raphael Kolinsky series 8408 #2 and #3
Winsor Newton series 7 miniatures #1 and #00

watercolors:

Although the palette I select for any given plant subject is small, I experiment with a lot of different colors to start. I frequently draw on the following:

(MG = M. Graham; DS = Daniel Smith; WN = Winsor Newton)

MG Ultramarine PB29

DS Indanthrone Blue PB60 or MG Anthraquinone Blue PB60

MG Phthalo Blue PB15:3

WN Perylene Green PBk31

MG Azo Green PY129 or WN Green Gold PY129

DS Hansa Yellow Light PY3 or WN Winsor Lemon PY175

DS Azo Yellow PY151

DS or WN Quinacridone Gold

DS Burnt Sienna PBr7

DS Perylene Maroon PR179

DS Quinacridone Coral PR209

WN Winsor Red PR254 or DS Pyrrol Red PR254

WN Permanent Rose PV19

MG Quinacridone Violet PV19 or WN Permanent Magenta PV19

MG Dioxazine Purple PV37

MG Raw Umber PBr7



Getting to Know Your Plant

Characteristics to observe, note and include in drawings

Habit

Stems

surface
color

Leaves

arrangement on main stem
orientation to main stem
size
shape, venation, margins
surface
attachment, petiole, stipules
color

Inflorescence

type
location

Flowers

presence, number, size, shape, color of parts:
petals
sepals
receptacle
pistil
stamens
color

Fruit and seed

location
type
size
shape
color

Other distinctive characteristics (e.g., prickles, thorns, bracts)?



References

Learning about Plants (to understand what you're seeing and drawing):

Glimn-Lacy, Janice and Peter B. Kaufman, *Botany Illustrated: Introduction to Plants, Major Groups, Flowering Plant Families*, 2nd ed. (Springer, 2006)

Harris, James G. and Melinda Woolf Harris *Plant Identification Terminology: an Illustrated Glossary*, 2nd ed. (Spring Lake Publishing, 2001)

Pell, Susan K. and Bobbi Angell *A Botanist's Vocabulary* (Timber Press, 2016)

Rauh, Dick, *The Science Behind Flowers: Plant Morphology for Botanical Artists* (Dick Rauh, 2020)

Simblet, Sarah *Botany for the Artist: An Inspirational Guide to Drawing Plants* (DK Publishing, 2010)

Zomlefer, Wendy B. *Guide to Flowering Plant Families* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994)

Descriptions of Native and Naturalized Plants in California:

<https://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/eflora/>