



The Garden: Where Creativity Blossoms!

Why do *you* garden?

Yes, you enjoy the beauty of your flowers and the taste of your fresh-from-the-garden vegetables. But the real attraction likely comes from a deeper place. Connecting with that deeper place is soul satisfying. Reveling in that aspect of the garden offers rewards that go well beyond the vision and the palate.

Direct your artistic impulses in any way the spirit moves—writing, painting, crafting, drawing—and your garden will enchant you in a new and vital way.



Fallen leaf, watercolor painting by Terry Pitzel

Journaling the Garden

A garden journal can take many forms. It might be a record of the sequence of blooms, and the date you picked the first tomato of the season. It can document the life stages of a back-yard butterfly from egg to larva to pupa to emergence, or a robin nestling in the holly outside your kitchen window. Or it may be an artistic outlet that helps you to examine and express, in words or drawings or collage, what most excited you on a particular day.



If you've never journaled before, try these exercises:

1. Sit in the same place once a week for three or more weeks, and draw the weekly changes in the scene before you. It might be a rosebud opening to full bloom and then fading, or the leaves on a branch of a tree changing from green to orange. It might be the head of a sunflower.
2. Take a moment to just listen. Write down every detail of what you hear—birds singing, leaves rustling, cicadas sounding. Make it into a haiku, a three-line poem with 5-7-5 syllables per line, respectively, if you wish.

3. Find something in your landscape that puzzles you—a weed you don't know by name, an egg mass on the back of a broccoli leaf, a gall on the stem of a goldenrod—and document it with a drawing. Then try to solve the mystery by researching it.
4. Collect seedpods. Examine their architecture. Write descriptions.
5. See the subtle beauty in your garden. Draw a mushroom, a lichen, a decaying leaf.



Pokeweed drawn with pokeweed berry juice by Diana Russo



Shield lichen, pencil drawing by Pam Ruch

Crafting the Garden

It's hard not to bring the garden indoors in one form or another. Cutting flowers is just a first step, a jumping-off point for the creative mind. You can fill a journal page with words, drawings, and found objects by creating a collage. Or you can create a folding “[book](#)” of mushroom spore prints.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

1. Collect natural objects with different textures, such as lacy leaves, cicada wings, and the shed skins of snakes. Use them to tell a story. Add just enough words to connect the objects.
2. Collect petals of many colors and press them dry. Arrange them creatively on the sticky side of laminating paper, and press the creation into your journal.
3. Make mushroom spore prints by cutting the stem from a mushroom and placing it, gill side down, on a paper and covering it with a bowl. Within 24 hours a spore print will appear. Spray the print with fixative.



Garden Collage by Diana Russo

Writing the Garden's Stories

Your garden is full of stories. How could it not be, filled as it is with life? Discover the stories by watching pollinators in action, and watching the chain of events as your plants attract pests, which in turn attract predators. The soil, especially, is a hotbed of activity. To learn the stories, pay attention to the action. Discover

the details. As you tell the stories be clear, rather than flowery, in your phrases. Your stories are acts of discovery; they can be brief haikus, or full-page essays. Try these exercises:

1. Sit, quietly, until your attention lands on a natural object. Get closer. Study it. Put the feelings it brings into words, and craft them into a haiku.
2. Outline a garden story—beginning, middle, end. Then start your story in the middle, going back to the beginning, and forward to the end.
3. As you work in your garden think of a cliché that fits the moment. “Busy as a bee,” or “pretty as a picture” might come to mind. Discard the clichés and come up with completely original similes.



September haiku, by David Sherr

In graceful decline
a potted gazania
sic semper vivo

For more information and resources on garden journaling, visit ArtofNatureJournaling.com