



Art comes in many forms and visual arts can include many different mediums. Using items from nature can create unique art pieces. Have you thought about gourds from your garden, stones from a nearby river or creek, leaves from a corn plant or tree, sand or shells from a beach, feathers from a bird, wool from sheep, or even using an entire shrub as your medium? You can take things one step further by changing colors using natural pigments from fruits like blueberries, spices like turmeric, or even mud to make a natural color-changing dye. Sources of natural art materials are endless.



## Exploring 4-H Visual Arts - Nature

### Spark Activity: Nature's Mosaic

Collect a variety of seeds. If you need to buy seeds, you can find them in most farm stores, a nursery or plant store, and even in some grocery stores. Shop in the dry bean section (for dry peas, beans, and lentils), in the snack section for nuts (pistachio shells work great), popcorn kernels, and seeds (like sunflower and pumpkin), and in the spice section (mustard seeds, poppy seeds, peppercorns, etc.). When choosing your seeds, be sure to consider a variety of colors and various shapes and sizes, which will give dimension to your final artwork.



Let's get started! You will need a canvas, glue that dries clear, and seeds. First, choose your canvas – it can be heavy cardstock, canvas, wood, plaster – be creative. Sketch your design onto paper first and consider how you will incorporate the elements of artistic design – color, space, shape, line, form, value, and texture. Mosaics make these elements fun! When your initial sketch is complete and you know which seeds you will use throughout your piece, you can design your final project. Identify which seeds you will use in each section of your sketch. Cover an entire section with glue, place the seeds you selected for that part of your design over the glue. Continue that process until you have completed the entire design and your seeds are securely in place. When finished, coat with a clear shellac or sealer. What different natural items could you use for a mosaic? Stones, shells, tree bark, feathers, soil, and leaves are all good examples. Research famous mosaics to see how many different ways mosaics have been used in art around the world.

## 4-H Project Levels and Goals

### Beginner

- Experiment with at least 2 different art sources found in nature each year (plant / tree parts, soil, stones, bones, feathers, etc.)
- Research at least one new artist each year; learn about their life and artwork
- Experiment with shape and texture
- Visit a local art show; identify artists who use natural items in their work

### Intermediate

- Expand your Visual Arts Portfolio to include work you created using 6 -8 different natural sources
- Experiment with line and color
- Interview a local artist who uses items from nature in their work
- Research the history of using natural items to make art – you can trace it back to ancient times

### Advanced

- Expand your Visual Arts Portfolio to include work you created using 9-12 different natural sources
- Experiment with rhythm, proportion, emphasis, and balance
- Research famous artists who specialize in using natural items in their work
- Explore how natural items are used in art in different cultures around the world

## Put Your Project Into Action

### Show Your Skills

- Create a display of your artwork and display it locally – possibly at a local art gallery, local library, community center, or senior site

### Service and Leadership

- Volunteer to teach an art activity using items from nature for kids in an afterschool program
- Volunteer at a local art event or art festival
- Make a piece of art featuring natural items and donate it to a fundraiser
- Organize a 4-H club tour of a local art studio
- Identify an artist in your community who specializes in using items found in nature and invite them to speak to your 4-H club or teach a workshop for your club members
- Volunteer to help set up the Visual Arts exhibit area for your county 4-H Show

### Entrepreneurship

- Create a craft business featuring your natural art and sell your items locally or with an online platform
- Create a commissioned artwork business
- Grow your own gourds and use them to create artwork that you sell

### Technology Connection

- 3D printing incorporating natural items
- 3D scanning being used to preserve ancient art, including rock art in Africa that is more than 4,000 years old

### Connecting with a Mentor

- Ask an art teacher at your school or a local community college if they know artists in the area who may be good mentors
- Visit local art studios or craft shows – talk to the artists exhibiting their work
- Local craft and hobby stores

### Events

- Enter an exhibit in your local 4-H Show
- Enter an exhibit in a local art show
- Attend local artisan shows featuring nature artists



### Careers Related to Visual Arts - Nature

Art Teacher	Topiary Sculptor
Artist	Sand Sculptor
Art Studio Staff	Float Designer for the
Art Museum Director	Annual Rose Bowl Parade

## Start a Conversation

Who are some famous artists that use natural items as their primary medium?

Where is the closest art show or art display that features natural art? (Plan for a family visit)

How many different ways can you think of to use natural items in your artwork?

## Want to learn more?

[go.illinois.edu/4Hnatureart](https://go.illinois.edu/4Hnatureart)

## Explore more at Illinois 4-H!

[4-H.extension.illinois.edu](https://4-H.extension.illinois.edu)



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