

Boundary Way

Anthotype Activity Sheet by artist Hannah Ayre



What is an Anthotype?

An anthotype is an early photographic technique which uses light sensitive material from plants to create an image. Fruit, vegetables, leaves or flowers are crushed and mixed with water and alcohol to create an emulsion. This emulsion is painted onto paper. Objects are placed onto the paper and exposed to sunlight. The sun will bleach out the areas not covered by the object, therefore when the object is removed, an image remains. Early photographers were experimenting with this technique as far back as 1816 and it remains an experimental creative process today.



Photosensitive Plants

Get outside and find some plants which will react to sunlight. Edible plants from a garden, allotment or foraged are a good idea. If you're unsure if a plant is safe to eat, do your research, to ensure you aren't working with anything poisonous. This is especially important if you are creating anthotypes with kids or using kit from your kitchen.

If gardening and foraging isn't for you, raid your kitchen cupboards. Cinnamon, coffee, food colourings, soy sauce, balsamic vinegar and red wine all produce interesting results.



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You Will Need

- A bowl & spoon to mix your emulsion
- Something to break up your plants e.g. a grater or pestle & mortar. For large amounts, a blender might be useful.
- Some fabric or a sieve.
- Water
- Paper (thick watercolour paper, or wallpaper lining is good).
- A picture frame (must be glass, not Perspex)

Other Useful Kit

- Scissors to cut up plants
- Apron, gloves, newspaper to protect you and surfaces from mess.

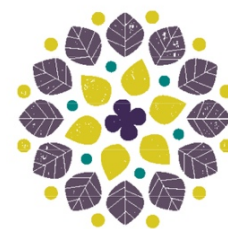
Choose a Plant

I picked a handful of raspberries.



Mash up your Plant

For soft fruits and leaves, a pestle and mortar is good. Or maybe a plastic bag and a rolling pin. For harder fruit and veg a grater is useful.



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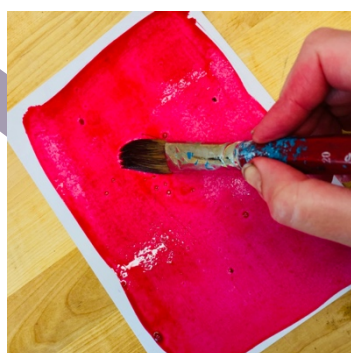
Add Alcohol

This isn't compulsory, but it helps to develop stronger colours. I added about 1 tablespoon. You are trying to dilute it into an emulsion which you can easily paint onto paper. Raspberries have a high water content, so I didn't need to add any water. Other plants might need some water adding to make it into a paintable emulsion.



Remove the Pulp

Pass your emulsion through a sieve or cloth to remove any seeds or fibres.



Coat the Paper

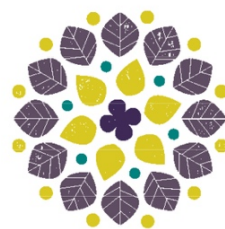
Using a brush or sponge, paint your emulsion onto paper. It might need a few coats to achieve a strong colour. Leave it to dry in a dark place between coats. (I applied 3 coats of raspberry emulsion).



Make Your Image

Place some 2D objects onto your paper. Here are some suggestions:

- Leaves
- Flowers
- Shapes cut from paper
- Lace fabric
- Make a pattern with string
- Feathers



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Frame it

Put your paper and 2D objects into a photo frame and expose to sunlight. If you have a garden or allotment, a greenhouse/cold frame/poly tunnel is perfect. Otherwise a sunny window in your home is good.



Reveal it

Some plants such as marigold petals produce results in around 3 days. Other plants may take several weeks. Keep checking it every day to see if the colour is fading and take it all out of the frame when you are happy with it.

With thanks to artist Hannah Ayre for providing the information and photography for this resource.

Allotment
Anthotypes

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