

## LEARNING TO LOOK

### Starting your Nature Journal with Trees

**Art Students:** You will be using the visual information you collect as resource material to create an image on a clay tile

**Horticulture & Science Students:** You may use your visual information and collected plant material to learn how to identify your tree using the dichotomous key method.

#### STEP ONE:

- Go outside to a location where there are trees.
- In your journal, write the date and time of day.
- Describe the weather, including temperature, any precipitation, sunlight, clouds, etc.
- Describe where you are. Note any interesting or unusual plants or animals or other features, natural or otherwise.

#### STEP TWO:

- Select a tree to observe (or you may compare two trees). Look at the tree from a distance. With your finger, trace the tree's shape in the air. Do this from the ground up and then from the top down.
- In your journal, briefly describe the shape of your tree.
- Make a telescope with your hands and look at your tree from a distance. Then make a picture frame with your hands and look at your tree. Study the branches and describe how the branches go out from the trunk. Hold your arms to show how the branches branch.
- Go closer to the tree. How does the perspective change? Now, describe your tree again, by making a list of adjectives that describe your tree. Keep describing your tree, paying attention to height and circumference, color, texture and pattern of the bark, smell, leaf, fruit or nut, moss, lichen, or oak galls growing on your tree.
- Describe where the tree is growing and what is around it. If the tree is growing on a hill what direction is the slope of the hill facing? Is your tree in a valley; is it near water, or far from water? Is your tree standing alone or among other trees? Is your tree the tallest one around, about the same height as other trees around it, or growing under taller trees?
- Are there any birds, insects, or animals in or near your tree? How are these other critters interacting with your tree?

### **STEP THREE**

- Find a comfortable space and sketch your tree. Make two or more sketches of your tree or trees.
- If you know how, use the blind contour drawing technique for your first drawing, like this: Make your drawing looking at the tree, not at your paper; don't take your pencil up off the paper until you are done.
- Make separate sketches of your tree's bark, leaf and nut or fruit if available, and a branch tip and bud.

### **STEP FOUR**

If you can, collect a sample of a branch tip, leaf, and nut or fruit of your tree.

### **STEP FIVE**

Bring your journal and collected plant material to class.

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Written by Pat Hight, artist in residence for the Glenwood School ArtStream program, for Bryant Watershed Project, <http://www.watersheds.org>. January, 2005.



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