

COLOURWHEEL Art Classes

Watercolour: Leaves



In this session we'll be using a simple palette of limited colours and looking at brushstrokes to create a selection of leaves using watercolour. This is a fairly open project which, once you've worked on technique and skills, you can take in a number of directions. The possibilities are endless. These make beautiful singular studies which can be put together as in the Meishe Art example below; garland and wreath designs can be created as in the example from Shayda Campbell; and they make beautiful greeting cards and invitations. Once you've mastered the colour mixing and brushwork, be creative!

Mood Board



Meishe Art Copyrighted Image



Jay Lee Painting, Copyrighted Image

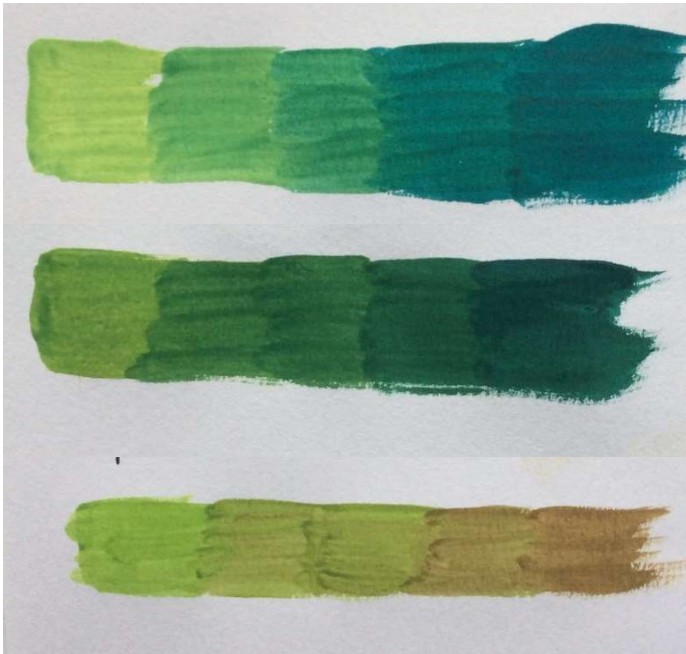


Shayda Campbell, Copyrighted Image

Warm Up 1: Colour mixing:

Greens can be notoriously hard to mix without turning into the dreaded mud. The possibilities of colour mixing are endless but have a go experimenting with the greens that you have and also mixing your own with the yellows and blues at your disposal. Depending on the types of yellows and blues that you have, the differences in greens can vary greatly. Below are a few tips.

If you're mixing your own greens and want a vibrant colour, choose a blue with a green bias – this will do much of the work for you. Blues such as Phthalo and Cerulean are good examples of this. Try ready mixed greens too. Combine these and see what happens.



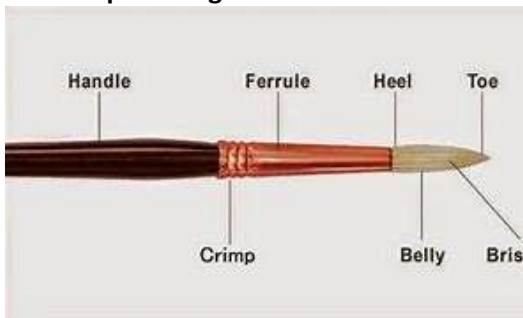
Top row: lemon yellow (a cool yellow) and phthalo blue are mixed to create a light green. Small amount of phthalo blue are gradually added to darken the colour.

Middle row: Medium yellow (a warm yellow) and phthalo blue are mixed to create a light green. Again, small amounts of phthalo blue is gradually added to darken the colour. Note the different between the previous swatch and this one. By simply changing the yellow, we have created a different green.

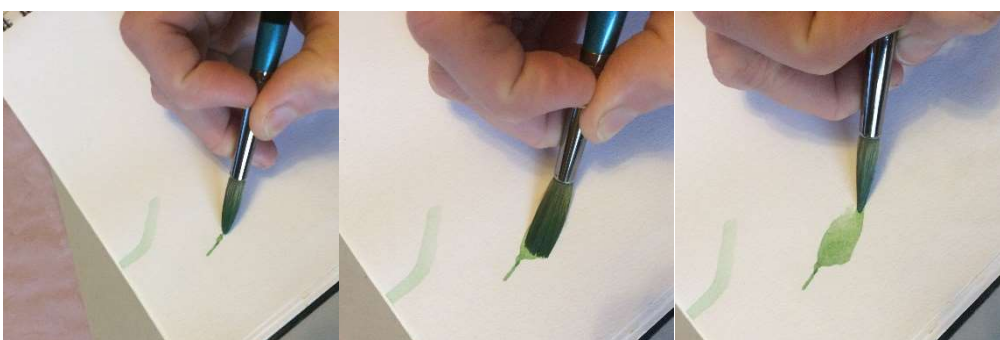
Bottom row: sap green and olive green are mixed to create the first swatch. This has an earthier feel. Since red is green's complementary colour, small amounts of red has been added to gradually darken the colour. By adding red, we end up with a more mossy green.

An interesting variation can be adding purple to greens to darken and cool the colour.

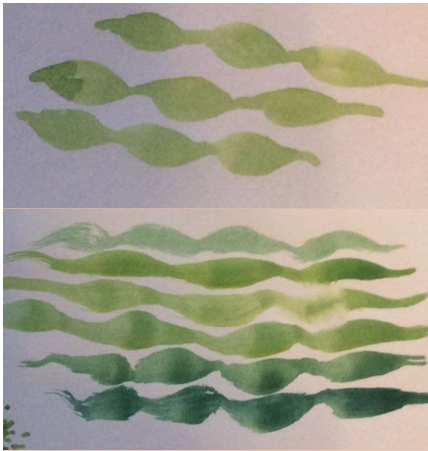
Warm Up 2: using the brush in different ways:



It's important to use different parts of the brush when painting. We too often only use the tip (the toe) of the brush. As a warm up, try these simple exercises to experiment with movement. Mix up your favourite green from your experiments.



This movement should be done in one go without lifting the brush from the paper. Use the toe of a round brush to draw a fine line and as you move down press the belly of the brush into the paper and twist to create a leaf shape. Move the brush to the toe again to create a fine line. Work down your page to create a string of these. Try with different sizes of round brush to create larger or more delicate leaf patterns. Experiment where you grip your brush too. In the images above I am holding the ferrule. Try holding the brush further up the handle as this too will create a different mark.



In the second image on the left, a larger round brush (size 10) has been used and with each string, the green has been darkened with a little more blue to create a variation in tone.

A couple of variations below left. Try a cluster of leaves and also creating a leaf using two strokes with the white of the paper left in between.



Below (left to right)

1. The belly of a size 8 round brush has been used to create oval shapes. Whilst the paint is still wet, thicker paint has been picked up with a size 2 round brush and dragged through to create a stem.
2. The toe of a round brush has been used to begin the line but then twisted so part of the bristle comes in contact with the paper. The brush has been twisted again to finish the line with the toe of the brush. This should be done in one continuous line without losing contact with the paper.
3. The toe of a flat brush has been used on its side to drag paint down the page.
4. A green has been mixed into a large pool of light green. Some of this in scooped out into two more wells and darkened slightly with a blue to create two more tones. A size 0 round brush has been used in stabbing motions to lay down the lightest tone and whilst this is still wet, the mid green and dark green are added, allowing some blending on the page.



Types of leaves:

Using what you've learned from the warm up activities, use a sheet of watercolour paper to try out mini leaf designs. You may wish to use leaves you've collected or below are some ideas. Do try to limit your palette – what can you achieve with no more than three colours?



Developing the study.

Once you've had plenty of practise, think about how to create a pleasing composition. The possibilities are endless as to how you can do this. I would encourage you to 'draw' with your paintbrush and try not to plan anything out in pencil first.



The study to the left is simple but effective. Note the way that water has been used to change the tone of the leaves behind those in the foreground to give a simple perspective to the image.

Another lovely composition to try is what I call a 'sprig'. For mine, I've mixed up a green using lemon yellow and phthalo blue. Starting at the top, I build up my sprig, beginning with a light green and then slowly darkening this using more phthalo blue. You want to use a variety of sizes and shapes in your leaves and use water to control the tone to get a variation. As I come closer to the front, I add a little violet to my green to cool the colour.



Load the paintbrush with paint and begin where you want the colour to be darker. By simply allowing the brush to run out of paint, you get a subtle variation in tone.

Use water to control the tone of your paint. For leaves behind/in the background, I water my paint down to create a light wash. I also make leaves in the 'background' smaller.

When using the belly of the brush, the paint may 'blob'. Don't be tempted to fiddle with this. Once dry, it can create some pleasing results.

Creating sprig compositions can give an almost folk art effect. Do also take a look at the mood board for other ideas.