

Introduction to Botanical Illustration II: Working with Watercolor

- Distance Course offered May 28 – July 13, 2019
- Instructor: Marcia Eames-Sheavly
- Limited to 12 students
- Cost: \$675

Course closes at the end of this course offering, around July 15. The on-line site and its contents will no longer be accessed after this date.

Course Overview:

Many students want to advance their understanding of the use of color in botanical illustration, yet find it challenging to take the time to learn. Despite our greatest intentions, the demands of the day often get in the way.

Our approach will be to keep it straightforward and simple to ensure that you progress. This approach is for the beginner at watercolor, and it does assume a comfort level with drawing.

This 6-week course (with a one week introduction to the software interface used to deliver the course) provides ample opportunity for you to advance your understanding of the use of watercolor. Your commitment to this period of time will help you to gain proficiency and comfort with the medium, although it may take many months or years to become "fluent" in this new language.

We will focus on primarily simple subjects, such as a single stem of a flower, a fruit, or a vegetable.

Our step by step process will introduce you to exercises, while you simultaneously write and reflect on the process. The instructor will take an active role in this creative endeavor by providing feedback on your illustrations and journal entries. You will also have the opportunity to learn from one another through an open forum in which you can share your ideas with others.

Purpose:

To build on your previous experience with botanical drawing techniques by introducing color into your work, and to engage in self-expression through this process.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Observe nature through both a scientific (structural) and an artistic (aesthetic) lens.
- Articulate a personal aesthetic -- what appeals to you, and what you enjoy.
- Gain some proficiency in watercolor.

Course Philosophy:

This course is designed to encourage your discovery of plants as the subject of art and to express your interest in the plant world by introducing color to your botanical illustration repertoire.

There are optional exercises. The more you practice, the more your proficiency will grow!

Our approach

This course teaches a less traditional form of botanical illustration. Often, instructors employ a more scientific approach, which can be an advantage for plant identification and description. In the past, this was essential, particularly before the advent of photography.

This course promotes painting to experience the plant world in a more creative way and to express yourself during the process. Although you can become as proficient as you wish, the course instruction will focus on the basics of getting familiar with watercolor in a supportive environment of self discovery.

Expectations

With this in mind, we ask that you begin without demanding expectations of your artistic abilities for each lesson or upon completion of the course. Keep an open mind, and please remember that it can take a lifetime of painting every day to develop the kind of skill that you see in the text!

Learning to paint is like learning to play the piano: you would never expect yourself to be playing symphonies at the end of your first lesson, and yet often, it seems the people have this expectation with art techniques. Please take the time to enjoy yourself and get lost in the process, particularly since it offers the additional benefits of providing an experience that gives you a break from the rush and bustle of daily life.

Location and setting

It is important that you choose a comfortable, quiet place to practice painting and complete your assignments. All of the numerous, everyday distractions can disrupt creative flow, limit your focus, and hinder a careful understanding of the plant material you will choose as your subject. So, shut off the cell phone and enjoy the break in the action!

We recommend that you set up your art supplies in a place where they can be readily accessed, rather than have to bring them out each time you use them. This will encourage you to practice more. If you don't have a place where you can leave your supplies uninterrupted, keep them

close at hand, in a box underneath your desk or table to eliminate the chore of searching for supplies when you feel inspired.

Working from life

You will need to have some access to plant materials for drawing: houseplants, gardens, stems from the grocery store or florist, produce, collected leaves or twigs, etc. They need not be expensive, and can be very simple, but it is critical that you work from life. There will be times when working with a photograph or other image is tempting, appropriate, or perhaps necessary. For the requirements of this course, however, unless we ask you to use an image or a photograph for the photo, please work from the 'real thing.' If you must use an image it should be one you have taken yourself.

Lessons

Our lessons are set up so that you will work through one lesson each week, completing assignments for that week. There will be some combination of warm ups, exercises, and optional assignments or additional challenges for each lesson. Often, you will be scanning your work and sending it to the instructor. Some weeks may contain more lessons than others.

Modifying lessons

You may find some of the lessons to be very straightforward in their approach. Although you need to submit the basic requirements each week, you certainly may embellish and add to them if you wish.

Reflective Writing

Your reflective writing allows you to develop new observational skills as well as a dialogue with the course instructor and your peers. Reflection is something that you can do at home, at work, or during a stroll through the garden. It is a very important part of developing the creative and observational components of your brain, something we expect to improve not just your drawing ability, but your full range of activities around creativity and the plant world. It will encourage you to make connections between the course and your life experience, in addition to reflecting on course content.

My Philosophy as an Instructor

This is a course that you are likely taking for your own personal enrichment and proficiency. As such, I hope that you are intrinsically motivated to complete readings and all assignments, including optional assignments, to devote considerable time to drawing, and to communicate with your colleagues freely and often in an effort to get the most from this course. I will assign readings, and I will assume you read them; I will not "test" you on content because I do not believe that should be your motivation. You will get from the course what you put into it.

Our communication will be positive and will focus on course content. Rude or offensive language and overly critical commentary will not be tolerated. It is a course taken for enrichment, and the way we communicate with one another will be constructive.

Please be open with your feedback and feel free to contact us with any questions. Open dialogue is encouraged.

Below is the lesson structure as it appears on the Moodle interface. January 27 - 30 is an introductory period to become accustomed to the site, introduce yourself and to practice scanning.

Lesson 1: Brush Care, Preparing Paper, Getting to Know Color

- Getting Started Resource
- Exercise 1.1: Preparing your paper, general brush care Assignment
- Exercise 1.2: Make a paint chart by mixing colors Assignment
- Exercise 1.3: Some tips to learn to get the most out of your watercolor Assignment
- Exercise 1.4: Play with Your Paint! Assignment
- Journal Entry Assignment
- Student Open Forum
- How do you hold a brush? Resource
- Big Brush file

Lesson 2: Applying a Wash

- Working with Wash Resource
- Reading Assignment Forum
- Exercise 2.1: Applying an even or flat wash Assignment
- Exercise 2.2: Creating a graded wash, and an overlay wash Assignment
- Exercise 2.3: Creating a blended wash Assignment
- Exercise 2.4: Overlaid: Wet on Dry Wash Assignment
- Journal Entry Assignment
- Student Open Forum

Lesson 3: Other Helpful Watercolor Techniques: continuing to become confident with brush, paint and water.

- Moving from Washes to Other Techniques Resource
- Reading Assignment Forum
- Exercise 3.1: Learning the Dry Brush Technique Assignment
- Dry brush file
- Exercise 3.2: Veins: a light touch Assignment
- Techniques for leaves file
- Exercise 3.3: Softening an Edge, Pulling Away Areas with Saturated Color Assignment
- Exercise 3.4: Dark Tones Along an Edge Assignment
- Journal Entry Assignment
- Student Open Forum

Lesson 4: Painting in Watercolor: Keep it Simple to Begin With

- Lesson 4: From Techniques to Painting Resource
- Reading Assignment Forum
- Exercise 4.1: Produce a Painting from a Simple Shape Assignment
- Exercise 4.2: Choose a Subject, Paint it Simply Assignment
- Exercise 4.3: The "Gestalt" of Painting Assignment
- Quick render file

- Exercise 4.4: Be Bold! Assignment
- Bold background file
- Journal Entry Assignment
- Student Open Forum
- Optional Exercise 4.5: Daffodils and Other Delights Assignment

Lesson 5: Progressing Toward More Complexity

- Lesson 5: Adding Complexity, Background Resource
- Reading Assignment Forum
- Exercise 5.1: Complete a Painting, Discover Your Preference Assignment
- Exercise 5.2: Discovering Your Preference, Continued Assignment
- Painting sequence file
- Exercise 5.3: Painting Background Assignment
- Journal Entry Assignment
- Student Open Forum

Lesson 6: Pulling it All Together

- Lesson 6: Composition Resource
- Warm Up 6.1: Produce Sketches of the Final Painting Assignment
- Warm Up 6.2: Getting Started with Painting Assignment
- Warm Up 6.3: Deepening Colors, Moving Toward Completion Assignment
- Final Painting Assignment
- Journal Entry Assignment