
Norton Simon Museum

Art-Making Activity Paper Making

Celebrate Earth Day with an activity inspired by the Museum's collection of 17th-century Dutch tulip paintings, which were created using handmade paper. During the 1600s, tulips were greatly admired and sought after by Dutch gardeners and botanists for their vivid colors, and varieties of tulips were recorded and bound in albums, as were the paintings in our collection. In this art-making activity, make your own paper using recycled scraps, then draw on it to create a scene inspired by nature.

LEFT TO RIGHT: *Great Tulip Book: Semper Augustus*, 17th century, gouache on paper, Norton Simon Art Foundation; *Great Tulip Book: Branson*, 17th century, gouache on paper, Norton Simon Art Foundation



Materials

- Paper scraps (one mail advertisement and a few small scraps of paper can make a 5" x 5" piece of paper)
- Parchment paper or wax paper
- Strainer
- Big bowl
- Small towel or old t-shirt
- Warm water
- Rolling pin (optional)
- Tray, baking sheet or large plastic lid
- Pencil
- Color pencils or markers (optional)



Steps

1

Begin by tearing up your paper scraps into small pieces and placing them in a bowl. The smaller the pieces, the less time it will take to soften the paper pieces in the next step.



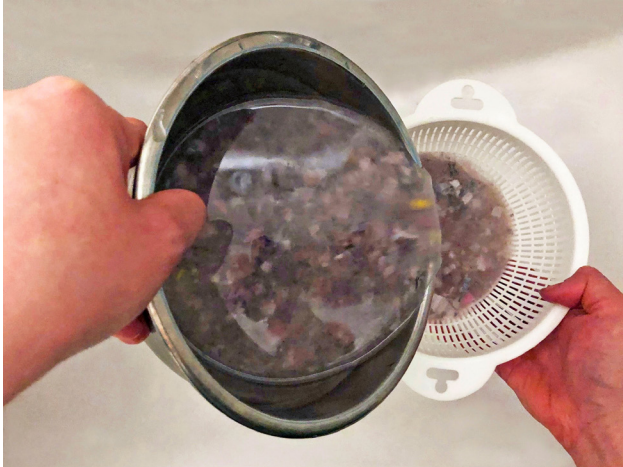
2

Fill your bowl with warm water. Let your papers sit and soak in the warm water for about 20 minutes.



3

Mash the papers with your hands until some of the pieces have partially disintegrated.



4

Pour the water and paper pieces into a strainer over the sink.



5

Then place the strainer over your bowl and push your papers down to squeeze out the excess water.



6

Lay out a piece of parchment or wax paper on a tray and place the pulp (the clump of paper pieces from the strainer) on the parchment or wax paper. Then, press it down to form a flat shape.



7

Place a towel over your pulp and using a rolling pin, roll out the pulp until it becomes flat and the towel absorbs the water. You can also use your hands to pat and press the pulp down flat. Note that, depending on what kind of towel you use, the texture from the towel will make an imprint on your paper which can add a nice effect. For a smoother effect, use an old t-shirt instead of a towel.



8

Then, lay out your paper to dry. This paper came out to be about 5" x 5" and it took a few hours in the sun to dry.



Once your paper is dry, think about what you appreciate in nature and make a drawing on your very own handmade paper. Show your creation to a friend or loved one and share how you celebrated Earth Day!