POST VISIT ACTIVITY
Discovering Natural Materials

Level: Ages 3 and up

Objectives
- To explore the possibilities natural objects offer as art making materials
- To develop and encourage creative problem solving and visual language skills
- To explore inventive alternatives to using traditional art supplies

Introduction
The natural world is an amazing collection of textures, colors, shapes, and visual arrangements, from which many picture book authors and illustrators gain inspiration. Through their work, readers can connections with the natural world we all share.

Students may have noticed shapes that are often found in nature reflected in the work of Eric Carle or in other exhibits at The Carle. Following your visit to The Museum, explore the ways in which natural materials like leaves, flowers, twigs, grasses, shells, and small stones can be used as art materials themselves. You might also introduce this idea by reading Leaf Man, written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert, with your students.
Preparation

With your students, collect leaves of visual interest with appealing colors, textures, and edges. Be respectful of the collection area, and make sure it is okay to collect there. Find small twigs, grasses, pebbles, shells, seed pods, flowers, and possibly branches. Encourage students to use their artist’s eye when selecting each material. Have them reflect on why they select particular materials and what they find interesting about each?

Some ideas for exploration:

Noticing leaf color
Many leaves are multicolored. Ask students what they notice about them as an artist’s material. What kinds of colors does Eric Carle use? Are the leaves in Lois Ehlert’s book, Leaf Man, all one color?

Leaf and flower pressing — Press leaves and flowers flat by laying in single layers between sheets of newspaper, sandwiched between pieces cardboard bound tightly with elastic bands. Another option is to iron leaves or flowers into wax paper or to place between two sheets of clear contact paper. What can you do with your pressed objects?
Window hangings
Use pressed leaves, pressed flowers, and other found natural materials to create a window hanging. Arrange the natural materials onto clear contact paper, sticky side up. When satisfied with the arrangement, press another piece of clear contact paper on top to seal the objects in. What shape will the window hanging be? Will you add borders? How will they be displayed? Will they be attached to each other or hung individually?
**Mobiles or sculptures**—Attach natural materials to an interesting branch or piece of driftwood using twine, tacky glue, or other found natural materials. Why would you choose to make a sculpture instead of a mobile or vice versa? How will this change how you think about the materials?

**Collage**—Invite students to arrange natural and found materials on paper. Offer a variety of differently sized, colored, and textured paper to choose from. Make sure the paper is sturdy enough to support the materials being glued. Before attaching using tacky glue, ask if any variations could be made. Could the same materials be arranged in another way to make a different picture? Offer glue once a pleasing arrangement has been made and multiple possibilities have been explored.

**Texture rubbings**—Lay leaves, pieces of bark, and flowers with different edges and textures under paper. Make sure there is a choice of paper (thickness, color, size). Use crayons with the paper peeled off or charcoal sticks to create rubbings of the materials. What do you notice? Do the edges show up? Is it a clear picture of what you started with? Why or why not? Can you add more colors to make it more visually interesting? What can you do with your new rubbing?

**Books to Explore:**

*Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle

*Leaf Jumpers* by Carole Gerber and Leslie Evans

*Inch by Inch* by Leo Lionni

*To Every Thing There is a Season* by Diane and Leo Dillon

*Beautiful Stuff!* by Cathy Weisman Topal

*Leaf Man* by Lois Ehlert

*Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf* by Lois Ehlert

*Fletcher and the Falling Leaves* by Julia Rawlinson, illustrated by Tiphanie Beeke

*Leaves! Leaves! Leaves!* by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace

*The First Red Maple Leaf* by Ludmila Zeman