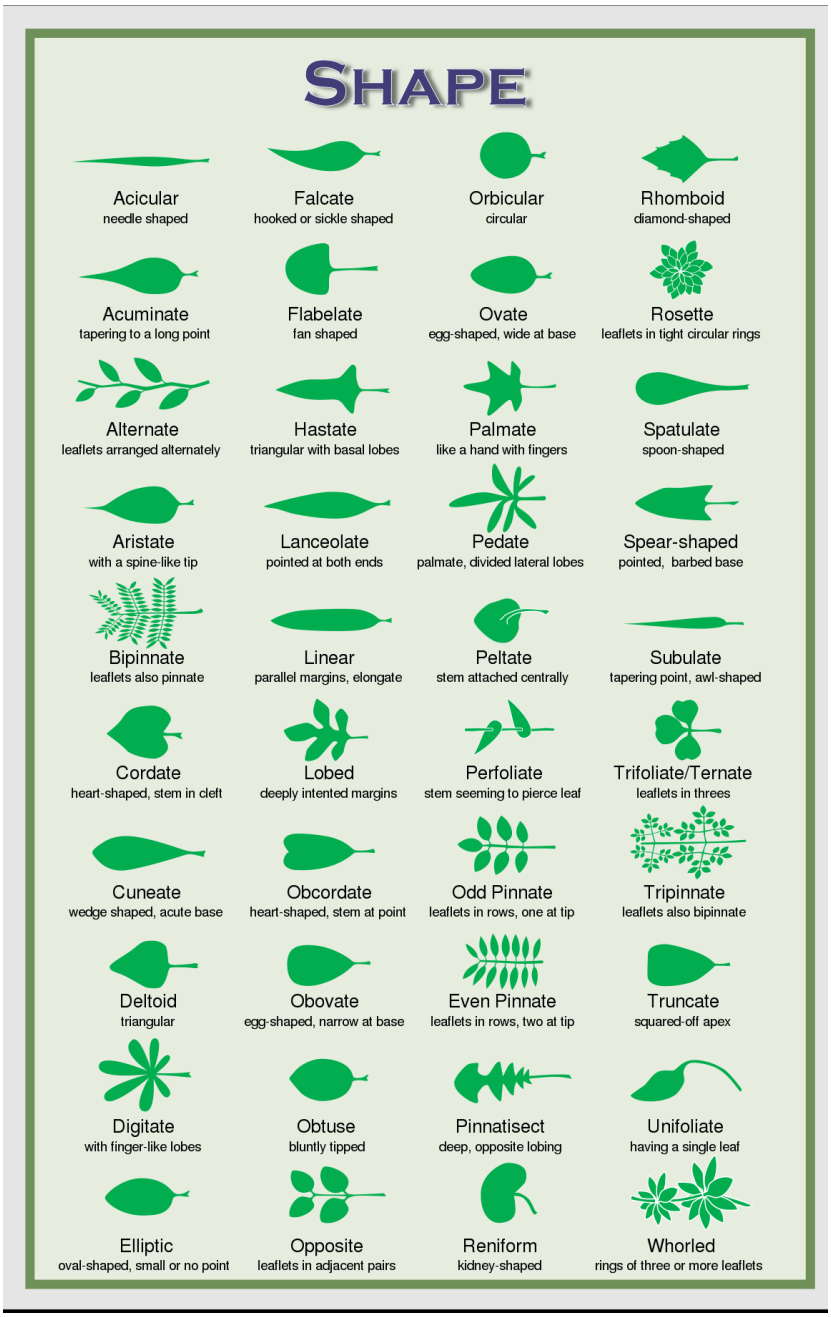
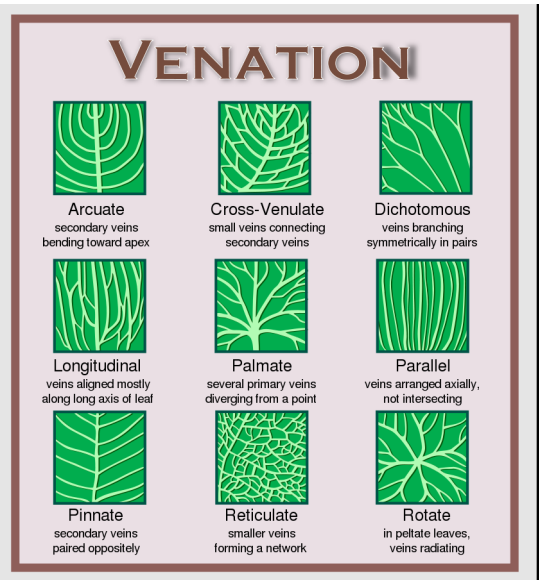


Chart of leaf morphology characteristics

Date: 2008-10-10 22:52 (UTC)
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leaf_morphology_no_title.svg

Author:
derivative work: McSush (talk)
Leaf_morphology_no_title.png

This was a featured picture on the English language Wikipedia (Featured pictures) and was considered one of the finest images.



MAKE A RUBBING TO CAPTURE A PATTERN

A quick, easy way to record a leaf edge and complicated vein pattern is to do a leaf rubbing. Botanical artists use leaf rubbings in the field for later reference. In an herbarium, lab, or studio, leaves can be scanned or placed on a copy machine to record the same information. Many leaves will last for further observation if you seal them under clear packing tape in your sketchbook.

Please keep good ecological practices in mind before picking any plant parts out of gardens, parks or wild areas. If a plant is endangered, would suffer from losing its parts, or if you do not have permission, please do not take pieces for rubbings or reference.

There are many subjects other than leaves that lend themselves to rubbings to record their surface and patterns. These include (but are certainly not limited to): petals, tree bark, rocks, shells, ceramic artifacts, fossils and gravestones. FIRST make sure the surface can stand up to a rubbing without damage.

Materials: Lightweight drawing paper or tracing paper, graphite pencil (2B or softer), charcoal or crayon.

Choose your plant leaves. Look for leaves that are typical of the plant; avoid leaves that are deformed or partially eaten.

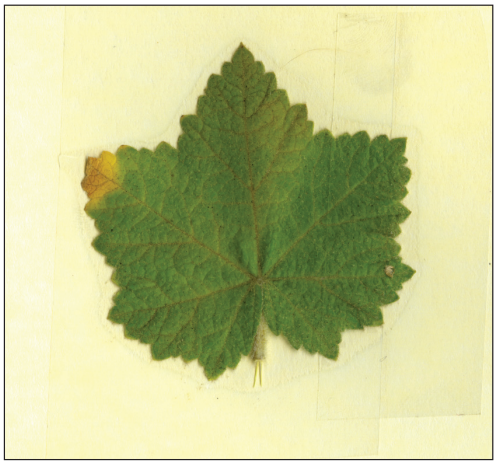
Observe the leaf characteristics, before beginning the rubbing. Write down a description of what you see, using words and terminology that will make sense to you later. Describe:

- The color, shape and size of the leaf
- The surface (Is it sticky, hairy, shiny, dull, or waxy?)
- The back of the leaf as compared to the front (Is the color different? Anything else?)
- The veins (Are they more prominent on the front or back? How do they branch? Do they go all the way out to the margin of the leaf?)

Create the rubbing. Place the leaf under your paper. Hold the leaf carefully and steady under the paper, or tape it. Using the side of a soft graphite pencil, charcoal or crayon, color over the leaf with even, consistent strokes until the edges and venation show. You may need to use a thin paper to get good results.

If the leaf is very different from front to back, do both sides.

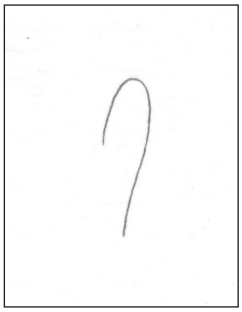
If you create rubbings on a separate sheet of paper, tape them into your journal.



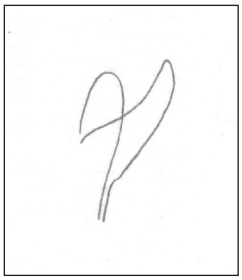
Deborah Shaw, leaf rubbing and leaf sealed under clear plastic in sketchbook.

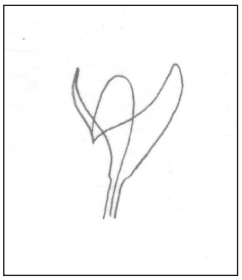
DRAWING LEAVES IN PERSPECTIVE

The secret to drawing leaves in perspective lies in finding the midrib—the center vein of the leaf. One of the most common mistakes made when drawing leaves in perspective is missing how the midrib lines up as the leaf turns in three dimensional space. Fortunately, there's an easy remedy. Feel free to trace over the illustrations below or copy into the empty practice box or a separate piece of paper:

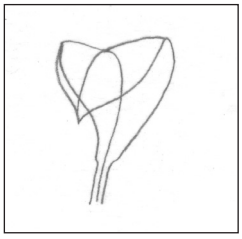


1. Draw the midrib first. The midrib is the central vein in the middle of the leaf.

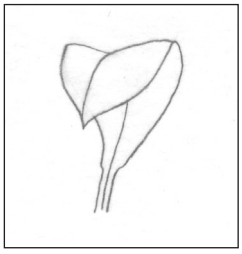


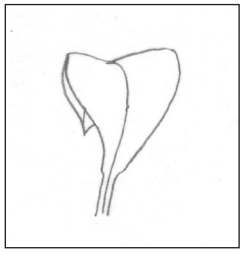


2. Draw the outside right edge and then the outside left edge. Pretend your leaf is transparent. Draw a continuous line for the right and left edges, even where the line is hidden from your view.



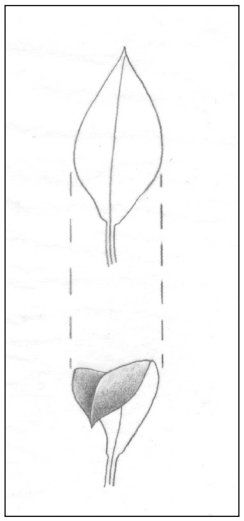
3. Draw the top surface edge from the outside edge to the curve on the midrib. Always be sure to draw the top surface as a curve, not straight across. Organic forms usually do not have ruler-straight lines.





4. Erase the "extra" lines that are hidden by the part of the leaf that is in front. Depending on which lines you erase, you can make the leaf come forward towards you (shown on the left), or go back (shown on the right).

   This is the same drawing as shown in step 3 above, with different lines erased.



5. Shade if you want. Add veins or textures.

The measurements of your "folded" leaf are the same as for a flat leaf: the width at the widest point of the leaf will be the same as a flat leaf, and the length of each of the "folded" portions of the leaf added together will equal the length of a flat leaf.

Deborah Shaw
Drawing a leaf in perspective.