

STROKES OF *Nature*

ARTWORK BY JOHANNA LOVE
STORY BY CHRISTEN HAMMONS

When we decided to bring back *GreenCraft*, one of the things we wanted to include more of was crafting and creating with natural elements. After all, what is more “green” than all that can be found right outside your door? While looking for inspiration, I saw a tutorial that taught children how to make their own paintbrushes from sticks and leaves. I just knew we had to make our own versions, and I knew who to ask.

Our director of photography, Johanna Love, has an incredible selection of fresh greenery and dried florals at her disposal. I told her my idea, and in an instant she was off. She scoured her collection, looking for sticks and stems that were strong enough to serve as the paintbrush handles, as well as dried leaves, berries, and florals that would make interesting “bristles.” She then tied the brush bundles to the handles with torn fabric strips. →





What Johanna created was even better than I imagined, and so I asked her to share some of her insights on making your own all-natural paintbrushes.

- Any material can be used as a brush. The success depends on how well you tie it to the “handle” and the consistency of the paint. Some brush materials are softer or more delicate than others, so the paint must be thinned to accommodate a lighter touch.
- Dried-out stems from old flower arrangements work very well for brush handles. If they are too fresh, they may be too flexible.
- Feathers work so easily as brushes. Other things, like flowers, might work better by stamping the paint rather than brushing.
- Some of the organic brush material may break off and dry into your paint strokes, especially if you let the plant matter dry out before painting with it. This is simply a part of the organic nature of this technique.





As you can see from the various marks shared on this page, part of the fun of making your own brushes is not knowing what looks they will create. Another fun part of the process is learning how best to use each brush, such as using it to paint or stamp. Try bundling different “bristles” together to see what happens, or try using different types of paints, like watercolors instead of acrylic. Once you start, it’s going to be hard to stop!

Johanna Love lives in Orange County, California, with her husband and their three sons, and is the director of photography at Stampington & Company. Follow her on Instagram (@lovejohannalove) to see more of her “hippie bling,” natural living, and family antics.