Family Fun Activity #2
Drawing from Nature

Drawing is about looking, not drawing.
And direct observation – drawing from the actual object –
is the best way to ‘see’ that object, that living thing or that non-living thing.

Drawing from nature helps anyone develop their super observational skills,
as well as observing nature more closely – in detail – with great focus.
You can draw nature while sitting outside, looking out a window,
or by bringing nature inside your house, or apartment, or where you live.

NO DRAWING SKILLS NEEDED –
just supply your artists – young or not so young –
with materials, space and time - to explore and get creative with nature.

Materials:
Paper for sketching
Thicker paper for final watercolor drawing, or drawing with color pencils
Watercolor Brush - if using watercolors
Container of water - for cleaning brushes
Paper towels – to absorb water from brushes

1. If you’re going to bring in found objects from nature, please don’t pick
   or pick up living things – like flowers, plants, or critters.
   Things that have fallen to the ground are the best natural objects
   to bring inside (although dead insects do make for some really
   interesting ‘looking’ and drawing).

2. Once you’ve gathered your found natural objects, bring them inside
   and spread them on your table, or surface. Pick one thing to draw,
or a few things to draw – your choice.

3. Each artist should have their own work ‘space’ – a space where they will look
   and then draw their object(s) - closely and carefully.
   What’s your objects’ shape?
   Are there any patterns? Any presence of – pinecones? spots? holes?
   *Make some preliminary sketches – in pencil or pen - and when you think you have
   an interesting sketch or angle of your object, then re-draw it on ‘good’ paper –
   maybe some watercolor paper or thicker paper.
   *You and I know that kids usually don’t like doing preliminary sketches.
   That’s fine – it’s all about the focused ‘looking’ – and then the focused drawing.
4. Let’s say your drawing is finished. You’re happy with the details you’ve added – because of your intense direct observation. You love it and now want to add color. Look at your found object again.

**Nothing in nature is one color.**

You may need to mix colors to achieve the desired ‘look’ for your drawn natural object. Add color slowly and - being careful not to obscure the details in your drawing. The longer you look at a natural object, the colors, the hues of the object will start to ‘pop out’ – to reveal themselves.

(Think of tree bark. Bark isn’t brown - but may have subtle hues of blue, green, yellow, purple, pinks – nature is amazing!)

One **TIP**: may I suggest that you **don’t** use color markers. – Markers are bold - and great – but might obscure the details in your drawing.

Another **TIP**: draw different views of your object. Experiment with ‘zooming in close’ for texture or pattern studies; for color studies – what’s not apparent to the eye, at first. But, on closer inspection – what do you really see? The possibilities are endless – and totally up to you.

So – have fun with ‘direct observation, and drawing from natural objects. It’s a great way to connect with things you might find in your backyard – or outside your house.

Enjoy Nature.  
Be Considerate.  
And Be Gently Cautious.