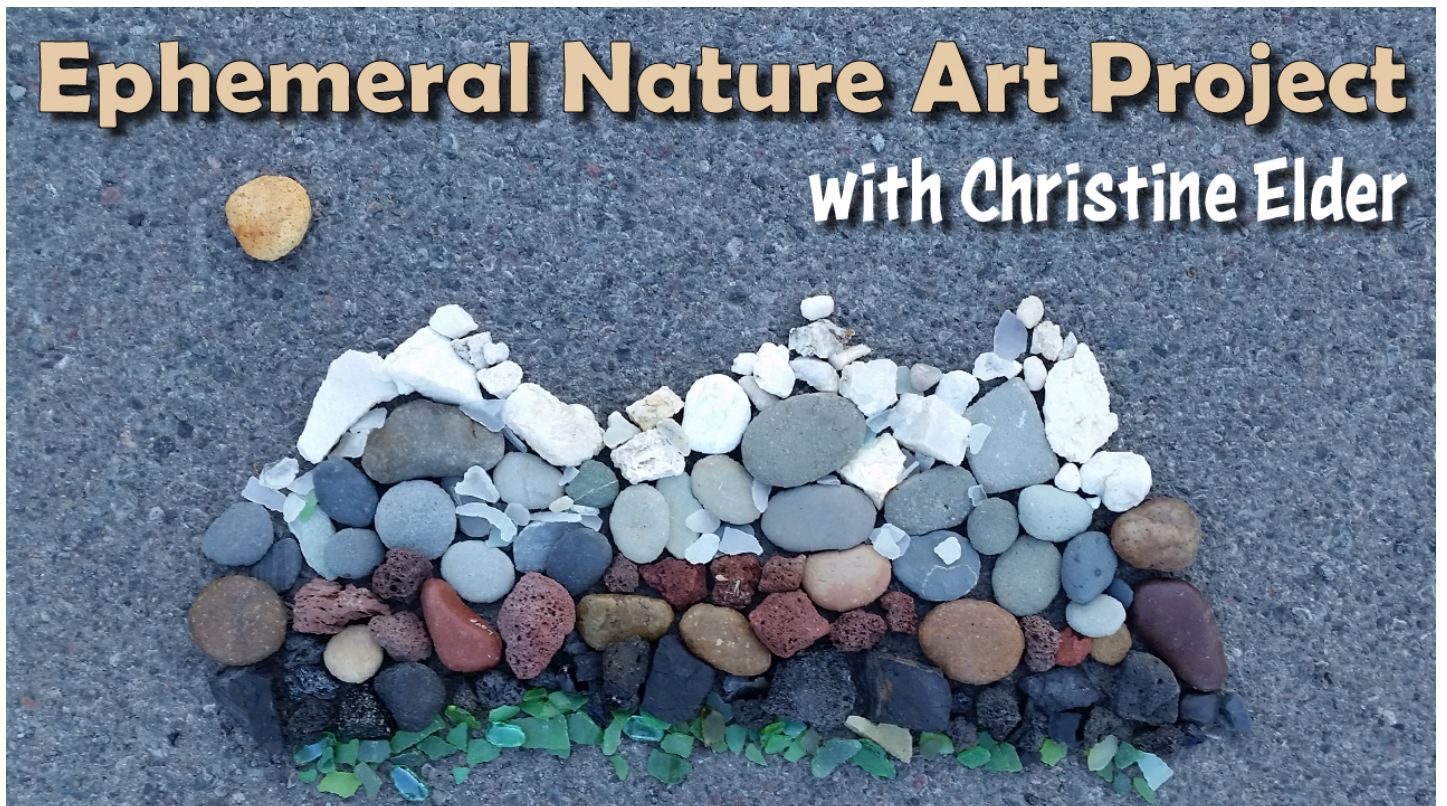


# THE EPHEMERAL NATURE ART PROJECT

Designed by Christine Elder



# Introduction to Project

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE INTRODUCTORY VIDEO FOR THIS PROJECT](#)

The Ephemeral Nature Art Project is designed to conjure the spirit of mandalas, balanced rocks, and Tibetan sand paintings; being ephemeral and using materials at hand.

My goals for you include seeing nature with fresh eyes, being present in the moment, enjoying the process as much as the product, reawakening your sense of wonder, and bringing you back to the exploratory mindset of your youth.

Think of this activity as a sort of treasure hunt in which you'll search for, collect, and arrange 'nature treasures' into an ephemeral art design.

Imagine yourself as an Australian bowerbird, who collects colorful things to arrange into a pleasing design to literally 'feather his nest'.



## Benefits of this Project

I designed this art activity to yield a variety of benefits including:

- A fun, low stakes project with no right or wrong way to proceed.
- Great to do with kids since it includes a 'treasure hunt' and is open-ended.
- Convenient creative project for when you don't have your art materials handy.
- Good project when you just aren't inspired to draw or paint in your journal.
- Excellent alternative for being creative in nature when you can't use your drawing hand, for example if it's injured or you are experiencing arthritis, etc.

# Steps to Follow

- Talk a walk in nature, or just your backyard, and be open to serendipity and the magic of the moment. Consider this adventure as a mini-safari or treasure hunt.
- Collect some objects from nature, like leaves, pebbles, feathers, berries, flowers (ideally from non-native/ invasive species that should be picked anyway!) If you can't get outside, try scouring your home for cool items, perhaps from your 'cabinet of curiosities.'
- As you walk and search for interesting items, use all of your senses, focusing your mind in the immediate moment and clearing your head of past or future thoughts. Awaken your sense of wonder to the beauty around you as you explore.
- Have a search image for a variety of colors, shapes, sizes, and textures of items you'll use that will serve as your art media, in place of pencils, brushes, paints, and paper.
- Bring your items back home or to a convenient spot in nature to observe what you've gathered.
- Find a comfortable, flat area to start arranging your items; on the ground, on a picnic table, or on a page of your journal.
- Now comes the fun part! Think like a bowerbird, and come up with some creative ideas for laying out your objects to create a pleasing design (see some ideas and examples below).
- Once you've created a design you might photograph it as a keepsake memory or just observe its beauty for a while, before returning it to the wild!

# Suggested Supplies

## 1) Nature Ephemera

Materials for this project are very open-ended and will completely depend upon what's available where you live and the access you have to local nature areas. The sky's the limit but could include such things as leaves, flowers, cones, seeds, acorns, seashells, feathers, small bones, rocks, minerals, moss, lichen, driftwood, etc.

Alternatively, if you can't get outdoors to collect, you could use 'nature treasures' that you may have gathered from previous outings or vacations. See my blog post on ['cabinets of curiosities'](#) for more ideas of items to use for this project.

Keep in mind that you'll probably need more than one of each item in order to create your Ephemeral Nature design.

## 2) Art and Documentation Supplies

You may want a camera to take a photo of your design, since, by definition, it is supposed to be ephemeral. Alternately, if you create your design out of small and durable items, you might be able to preserve it by gluing the items to a mounting board.

## A Caveat

Please be aware of any rules regarding where you can collect and what is legal to collect. For example, feathers of many bird species are illegal to possess, and some rare plants and wildflowers are protected as well.

Also be mindful of avoiding things that might be poisonous, venomous, or simply irritating to the skin if you touch them (like poison oak and poison ivy).

# Ideas for Themes

Your designs will likely fall into one of two categories, representational and abstract.

Consider using the principles and elements of art and design when searching for ideas to arrange your objects. These include:

- Balance
- Rhythm
- Pattern
- Emphasis
- Contrast
- Unity
- Movement
- Line
- Shape
- Form
- Space
- Value
- Color
- Texture

You might like to [download](#) a useful cheat sheet on the principles of design from the [J. Paul Getty Museum](#) to bring with you in the field for inspiration.

# Examples for Inspiration

Your designs will likely fall into one of two categories; representational and abstract. Here are some examples below.

A representational rock design that depicts the Three Sisters mountain range in Oregon where I live with the full Strawberry Moon rising above their snow-capped peaks.



A representational design that represents a forest and meadow using horsetails, lichen, pine needles, and seeds.



An abstract design using acorns, giant sequoia cones, porcupine quills and snake vertebrae.



An abstract design using red-shafted flicker feathers and a stone.



# Let's Keep in Touch!

I hope you enjoyed the *Ephemeral Nature Art Project*. I'd love to have you share your creations inside my Facebook group; [Christine's Nature Sketching Challenge](#).

Below you'll find other places to keep in touch with me online.

- [Website](#)
- [YouTube Channel](#)
- [Facebook page](#)
- [Crowdcast](#)

