

Plant Ink

Let's Create! Quarantine got you blue? What about green, violet, or pink? Plants aren't just delicious—they can make beautiful colors. The golden color in this astronaut painting comes from turmeric, a yellow spice! Get ready to dive into the vibrant world of plant inks with this painting project.



Materials:

- **Plant scraps (e.g., colorful vegetables, fruits, spices, flowers, roots)**
- **Pot**
- **Stirring spoon**
- **Water**
- **Sieve/colander**
- **Watercolor paper**
- **Paintbrush**
- **Gloves**

Steps:

1. These colors might stain, so use clothes and a paintbrush you don't mind getting dirty. Use gloves when you might touch the dye.
2. Find some fruits, vegetables, or spices that might make colorful dyes. Coffee, beets, onion skins, avocado pits, and red cabbage are good starting points, but try whatever plant foods you're curious about!
3. Working with an adult, heat a pot of water until boiling. Now add your food scraps. Keep an eye on your colors—some plants will make strong colors in just a few minutes, but others might take over an hour.
4. After you have a color you're happy with, strain out the food scrap pieces and start painting. Invent a plant, sketch an imaginary planet, paint the view from your window—or something new!



Caregiver tips:

- To get darker colors, let the ink dry, then paint on another layer.
- Which do you think would make more color—a whole beet, or the same beet cut up into small pieces? Why?
- What would happen if you mixed plant scraps that made different ink colors?
- The pigments in plants have names including green chlorophylls; yellow, orange, and red carotenoids; and red, blue, or violet anthocyanins! To learn more about these dyes check out this [Leaf Pigments article from the Harvard Forest website](#).