

INTERTWINING WITH NATURE



Becoming entangled with nature encourages more meaningful behaviour by fostering deeper observation and recognition of existing connections. First observe and take note, then intervene and act! Careful observation of nature and an awareness of the observer's connection to it can be achieved through drawing, painting, taking photographs, dyeing with plants and other creative methods. To become more entwined in our own practices we have used various techniques – drawing, collecting stories through layers of colour, studying our own inner worlds and drifting in the peripheries. We have focused on the process, not the outcome.

Alienation from nature and a lack of emotional connection with non-human species are both consequences of the environmental crisis and contributing factors to it. Numerous studies have shown a link between contact with nature and environment-friendly behaviour.¹ Even in the local context, connections have been made between everyday noticing of nature, receiving emotional support from it, and sustainable behaviour.² This suggests that activities which strengthen emotional bonds with nature can help foster a deeper sense of connection.

When intertwining with nature it is important to think about relationships in nature, and also one's own connection with it. For example, when drawing try to notice your own connection with the thing being drawn. The drawing of nature has been criticised for objectifying nature,³ but in the age of smart technology and artificial intelligence, the value of drawing could be in the process, the opportunity to focus, truly observe and feel oneself as part of nature. These exercises emphasise the different senses, noticing other perspectives and creating personal connections. While drawing, the observer reflects on their own perception, thereby establishing a personal connection to the place. Afterall, we care for who and what we know.

Entangling can also occur when dyeing with plants. In the process we learn to identify plants and notice the processes they influence. Creating practical connections helps us to establish personal relationships with plants and other materials. When dyeing with plants, a broader understanding of the surrounding world, such as a knowledge of chemistry, is also useful. It is also good to know the origin of the fibres in the fabric you are dyeing. How else can we understand why different fabrics take colour differently, or why a pink flower gives a brown colour. To connect with your surroundings and shift your focus see the method card "Gardenly slowness."

1 Mackay, Caroline M.L., & Michael T. Schmitt 2019. Do People Who Feel Connected to Nature Do More to Protect It? A Meta-Analysis", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Volume 65, October 2019, 101323. Elsevier, 2019, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2019.101323>.

2 Ministry of Climate 2023. Student environmental awareness pilot study. Turu-uuringute AS. <https://kliiministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/documents.10.10.2024>.

3 Neri, Janice 2011. *The Insect and the Image: Visualizing Nature in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700*. University of Minnesota Press.

Exercises

- In addition to walking on foot, take the long way. Take time to arrive.⁴
- Take a drawing support, a few sheets of (recycled) paper and drawing equipment. Choose a spot in the garden, forest, meadow or in an urban park – a place you expect to find a variety of living organisms. If drawing is not your thing, then you could write.
- To engage with the soundscape, close your eyes and listen to your surroundings. Who is active around you? How far can you hear? When you feel you have listened enough, open your eyes and write down what you hear.
- To engage with the touchscape, choose a surface you can sense through touch – the ground, tree bark, leaves. Close your eyes and explore the surface with your hands, your cheek or your whole body. Draw this experience. If you need to, repeat the task.
- To engage with the scentscape, close your eyes and sense your surroundings with your nose. What do the smells make you think of? Draw how the smells make you feel and think about the animals for whom smell is the strongest sense.
- Gather different plants⁵ to observe the abundance of species in the garden or in nature. Try to identify plants you do not know. On your foraging walks invite someone along who is knowledgeable or take along tools for plant identification.
- Use the plants you have gathered to dye stained clothing or to give yarn a new colour. In this way you will discover surprising possibilities and the diversity of nature.⁶

⁴ Listen to: Lehari, Lehari, Kaia 2005. Taju ja liikumine. Kaks teeloleku võimalust. *Õõulikool*, 22.10.2025 <https://www.ylikool.ee/loengud/taju-ja-liikumine-kaks-teeloleku-voimalust> (vaadatud 19.11.2024).

⁵ For plant collecting practices see: Valk, Piret 2020. All for colours: dyes from plants growing in Estonia on textile. *Studia Vernacula*, 12/2020, lk 154–197, <https://doi.org/10.12697/sv.2020.12.154-197>.

⁶ Listen to: Lennuk, Lennart 2024. Looduse leksikon. Jäälind ja värvid. 30.06.2024. ERR Arhiiv, <https://arhiiv.err.ee/audio/vaata/looduse-leksikon-jaalind-ja-varvid> (vaadatud 19.11.2024).

Photos: Jane Remm.



Using drawing to notice relationships in nature it is worth paying attention to the information received through different senses, and to reflect on your own role in the surroundings. Attentive observation can lead to a state of flow – it becomes hard to leave, and time disappears. Drawing outdoors with deep focus sharpens our perception. By observing something over a longer period, connections begin to form between me and others; for example, drawing may start to feel slow and lazy compared to the industriousness of bumblebees.

Photos: Karin Kahre, Marta Konovalov.



Marta Konovalov adds new layers to garments with plant-based dyes and in the process “mends” stains. When we collect plants for dyeing, we shift from being users to foragers. Inspired by the shapes of the collected plants, other repairs have also taken on more organic forms, placing the found materials and mends into dialogue. In a workshop for collective entanglement with nature, some participants added layers to their worn or stained clothes by using plant dyes and the shibori technique and discovered the potential of plants usually considered weeds or inedible.