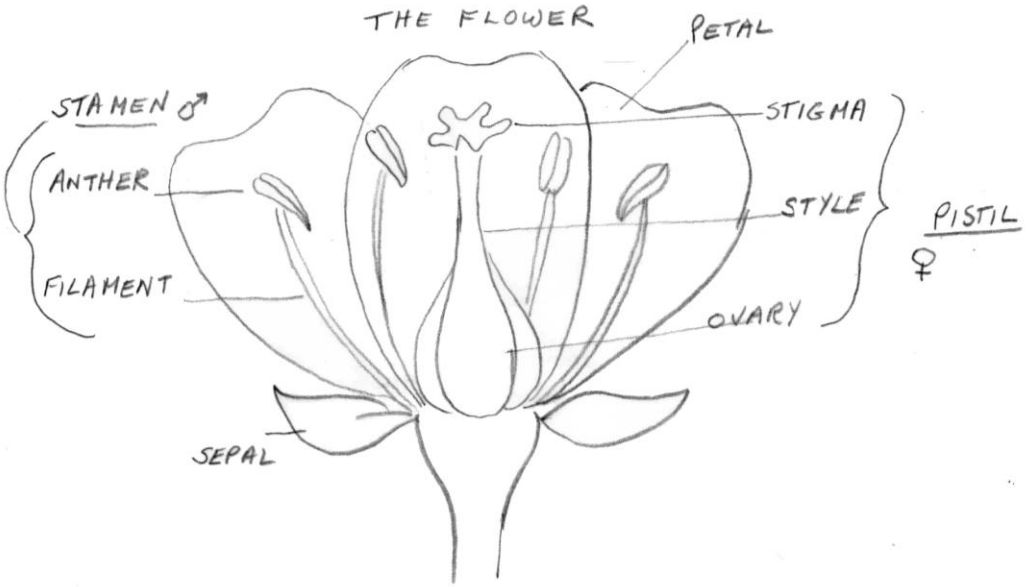
The Flower

Ruskin says, *"I would rather teach drawing that my pupils may learn to love nature, than teach the looking at nature that they may learn to draw."*



Dissecting a flower can be one of the most exciting things you do in botanical art. The different parts of different flowers are amazing to behold. It is also essential for us as botanical illustrators to understand the structure of the flower. By knowing the parts we are able to better tell the story of the flower. We want and need to know how the flower works.

The simple botany- a basic flower has four parts on the **receptacle**- the swollen part of the stem:

The **sepals** surround and often protect the flower. We call that part of the flower the **Calyx.**
The **petals** are usually colorful and often marked to attract insects. They are the **Corolla.**
If the sepals and petals have evolved to look alike (like Tulips or Alstromeria, we call them **Tepals.**

The **male** parts are the **stamen**. They are composed of an **anther** which produces the **pollen** and a **filament**. The anthers attach to the filament is various ways. Always check them out before you draw them.

The **female** part of the flower is the pistil, composed of **stigma** (think sticky), the top part which receives the pollen, **style** the longer part that attaches to the **ovary**. A simple pistil is also called a **carpel**. In pollination, when the pollen germinates it sends a tube down the style to the ovary to fertilize the ovum. The ovary then develops into a **fruit**. Ovaries that are above the petals are called superior (Oriental poppy). Ones that are below the petals as in the rose are called inferior. The ways that the fruit present themselves to us are myriad, Nuts, seed, peas, capsules, what we call fruit.

Look at the beautiful illustrations of Arthur Harry Church and Maud Purdy and then look at your own flowers and draw them. Refer to Sarah Simblet's Botany for the Artist and Anne Ophelia Dowden's, The Clover and the Bee and From Flower to Fruit.

Nina Antze
Drawing Nature

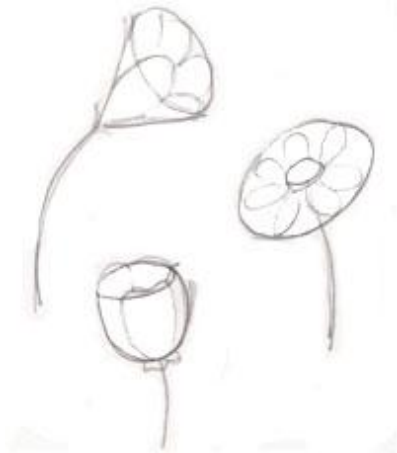
Drawing a Flower

Make friends with your flower. How are you going to explain it to others? Be a scientist and an artist. Create a study sheet with all the information you need to complete a portrait of your flower. Do some research on your flower. Count petals and sepals. Understanding your flower will help you draw it. Smell it. Feel it.

Gesture Drawing- Quickly and loosely try to capture the gesture and shape of the flower. Allow yourself to be free. Cissy Freeman calls it "low-risk" drawing. Do more than one of these. This helps to loosen up but may also change how you look at the flower. Find the rhythm of the flower.

Geometric Drawing-

- Do more than one view- Front, Back and Side
- Use **simple shapes** to help outline and block in the flower or object. Most flowers will fit into some common shapes- cup or cone or cylinder.
- Get the **angle** or pose of the flower.
- Start at the **center.** Everything meets in the center of the flower. **Measure** from there to edge of petals. Check proportions and relationships. **Measure everything** .
- Look at the **angles** from tip of one petal to tip of the next petal.
- Make sure your petals connect to the center. Measure petal length and width but be aware of **foreshortening** (petals that come toward you or away from you will look shorter than they actually are). *Draw what you see not what you know.*
- Look at the **negative spaces** between petals or leaves. Look at where one petal touches another.
- Start out loosely getting the gesture while still carefully observing.
- **Keep refining** your drawing while still retaining the energy of the flower.
- Check and draw leaf and stem connections, venation of the leaf and the shape of the stem.
- Do petal and leaf studies to help establish color.



"Flowers changed the face of the planet. Without them, the world we know –even man himself-would never have existed." Loren Eiseley, The Immense Journey

Nina Antze
Drawing Nature

Drawing Overlaps

Drawing overlaps comes up often whether we are drawing leaves or flower petals. What happens with overlaps is that where the object (leaf or petal) curve toward us (or away), a "soft edge" is created. In other words we see it as a part of the petal but to take that three dimensional form and make is two dimensional on our paper we have to draw that curve as an edge, i.e. a line.

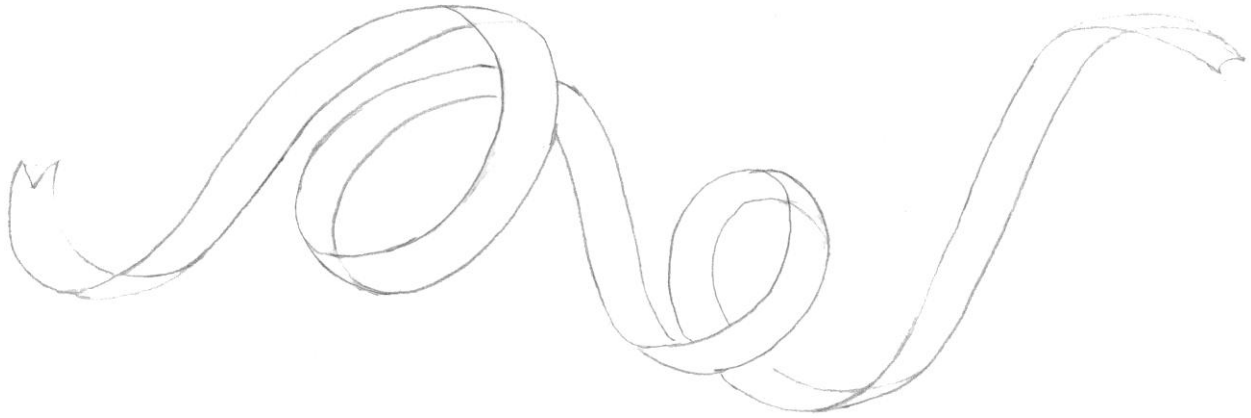
(When coloring that "edge" it is important to remember that it is a soft curve and should be shaded as such.)

Always follow the lines of what you are drawing (close one eye to flatten what you see if that helps.) Use your pencil to see what direction the edges go. Draw what you see not what you know.

Practice drawing leaves twisting on your drawing paper-

- Draw center vein of leaf
- Draw the side of the leaf closest to you.
- Draw the other side of the leaf.
- Erase the extra lines and smooth out the "soft edge"
- Notice that you can make these leaves face the opposite way depending on which side you erase.

Try drawing or tracing the rose petal or a curving ribbon to get the feeling of how overlaps work. Play later with shading these shapes.



"I firmly believe that everyone can learn how to draw –if they want to… The first step is to simply have a go."...Sarah Simblet, Botany for the Artist

Perspective and Foreshortening

Perspective is a technique for drawing a three dimensional object on a two dimensional piece of paper.

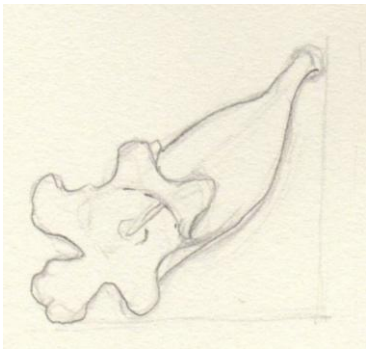
Foreshortening is a method of showing perspective by shortening the object. As we tilt flower toward or away from us the petals of the flower appear shorter or sometimes longer. We must draw what we see- shorter petals- not what we know and then the flower will look three dimensional.

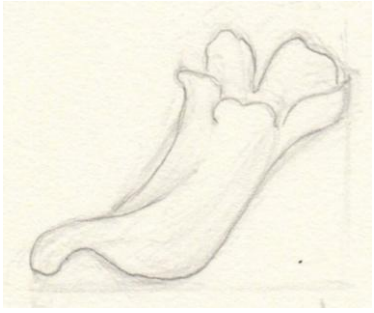
Doing multiple views of the same subject can help us to understand perspective and foreshortening.

It is also helpful in drawing a flower like the foxglove and agapanthus with many florets facing in different directions. Multiple flowers can seem overwhelming but are much easier once we understand how to draw them.

Work on a tubular flower like the Foxglove to get the sense of perspective.

- Lay the flower on you table horizontally so you can see the full length of the flower. Measure it and then proceed to draw it.
- Now turn the flower at a 45 degree angle pointing away from you- this can be either from the front or back.
- Measure again. Remember you must measure against a flat plane. Get as close to the flower as you can but keep your ruler or divider on the horizontal plane. Do not lean into the flower.
- Mark that measurement (it should be shorter than your first measurement) and proceed with your drawing.
- Use your pencil to check angles.
- Do another view and another.





"Drawing is the honesty of the art. There is no possibility of cheating. It is either good or bad." …Salvador Dali

Nina Antze
Drawing Nature

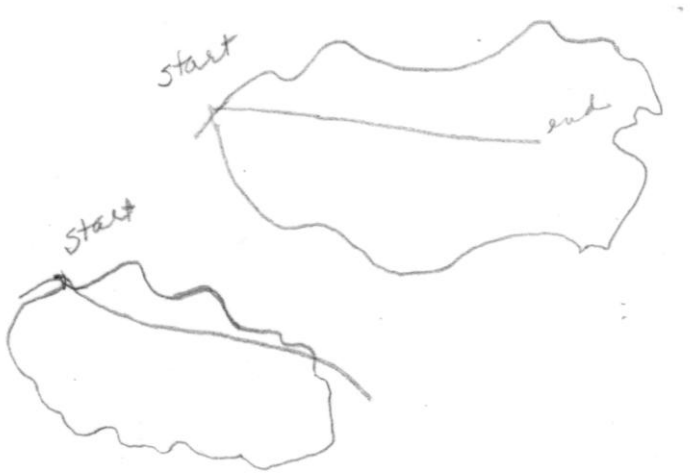
Contour Drawing

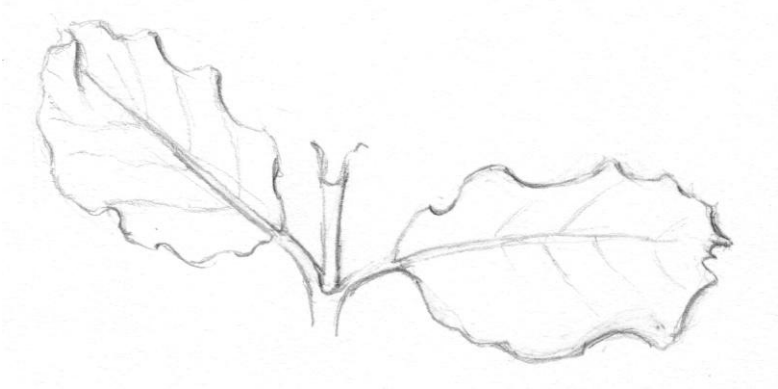
Contour drawing is another way that we can free ourselves from listening to our brains describe an object and training our eyes to see the subject.

From Wikipedia, "**Blind contour drawing** is a drawing exercise, where an artist draws the contour of a subject without looking at the paper. The artistic technique was introduced by Kimon Nicolaïdes in *The Natural Way to Draw*, and it is further popularized by Betty Edwards as "pure contour drawing" in *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*."

The idea is to look at an object and without looking down at your paper, very slowly follow the contour of the object with your eyes and your pencil. **Doing this very slowly is important.** Pretend that you are touching or tracing the edge of the object with your hand. There are differing ideas of why this could be helpful to your drawing. I think it helps you to slow down and concentrate on what you are looking at and encourages a new way of seeing.

- Try doing a contour drawing of one or two silk tassel leaves.(Garrya sp.)
- Depending on where you start see if you can include the center vein.
- Next draw the leaf or leaves as you normally would.
    - Remember to start with the center vein.
    - Measure length and width.





Did the contour drawing help?

"The first function of an art student is to observe, to study nature."
– Kimon Nicolaides, The Natural Way to Draw

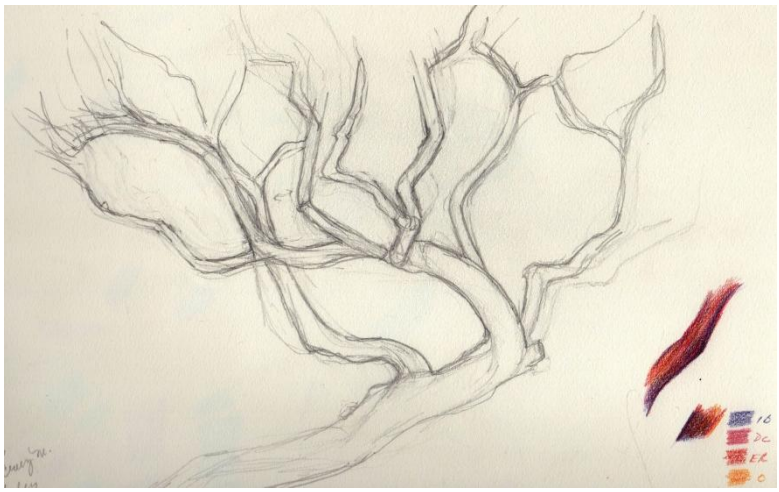
Nina Antze
Drawing Nature

Negative Space- "Making something out of nothing"

In art, the space between things is called negative space. The theory is that we do better drawing negative space because we have no name for it, no preconceived notions of how it should look- no words like "foreshortening, curling, coming at me. It is just space.

We use negative space in different ways.

- The first is to help us draw things. Drawing the negative space, what is in-between, helps us to measure and see angles that we might not otherwise see or get correct. In the drawing of the Manzanita tree, there were many branches going in many directions. Concentrating on and drawing the negative spaces helped me to understand which branches were which, what direction they were going in and the size of the spaces in between them.
- Negative space is also very important in composition. The spaces in between objects in a painting can make us comfortable or uneasy. They can help objects to relate to each other. They can create rhythm. They can give our eyes a place to rest and show us what to leave in and what to leave out. They can point our way through a painting.
- Negative space can be a powerful tool in both drawing and composition. Whenever you are drawing a flower, continually check your negative spaces. If they are correct, chances are your drawing is. If they are not, correcting them will at least show you where you went wrong. As I started to focus on the negative spaces in between these branches and work on each one right to left, I discovered that my space on one was too thin. I had not gotten those branches in the right place which would throw off their relationship to the other branches.
- Start looking at what you don't see- the spaces in between. They can be quite beautiful.



"The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters, is simplicity." Walt Whitman

Nina Antze
Drawing Nature

Forms in Nature- Creating Roundness

Practice drawing some simple flower and leaf forms.

Shade them in graphite to create dimension and form. Work with a consistent light source (usually left hand light.) Train your eye to see the values in nature, the lights and darks. What we are looking for are the subtle gradations of light.

In graphite we usually darken our object by adding more graphite or pressing harder.

How do we do this in colored pencil?

- Choose a pencil that darker than your **local** color. (Local color is the color of your object.)
  - Use an analogous dark- in the same color range (e.g. red for pink, dark green for sap)
  - Use a medium neutral pencil like a medium gray or Faber-Castell #165 Dark Sepia
  - Use a complementary color (red in a green leaf.)
- **Test that color with the pencils you have chosen to be your local color. That means blend these pencils together and see if they work well together.**
- Experiment with laying down the colors you choose working from light to dark or dark to light. Sometimes we like to start dark so that we create form first. This is not a rule but one method of working. The choice is yours and may differ from subject to subject. Sometimes we "sandwich" our dark in between layers of color.

- Some rules about using colored pencils:
  - Names do not mean very much. Indigo (FC) is not Indigo (P) is not Indigo (CD) nor is Dark Sepia the same in different brands. FC Magenta is very different from Prismacolor Magenta!
  - Make charts of your pencils and consult them. Learn what your pencils can do for you.
  - Simplify your palette. Don't carry around pencils you do not use. (Greens in particular!)

"… drawing depends, primarily, on your power of representing Roundness. If you can once do that, all the rest is easy and straightforward…For Nature is all made up of roundnesses…boughs are rounded, leaves are rounded, stones are rounded, clouds are rounded, cheeks are rounded, and curls are rounded. The world itself is round, and so is all that is in it…" John Ruskin, The Elements of Drawing

Nina Antze
Drawing Nature