

Create Changing Leaves Scratch Art

Everyone appreciates the beauty of the colorful leaves in autumn. The changing of the leaves seems almost magical to young children. Understanding the “why” behind this amazing display, however, can be very challenging for first graders.

Here’s the science behind the magic: the colors, or pigments, are always in the leaves but are masked by the green in the leaves' chlorophyll. In the fall, as the trees prepare to become dormant, their production of chlorophyll slows, revealing the other hidden pigments in the leaves. In this activity, help your child understand how leaves show their "true colors" with the help of a beautiful scratch art painting.

What You Need:

- White paper
- Crayons
- Dark green tempera paint
- Dishes for paint
- Foam brush
- Liquid soap
- Toothpick
- Scissors

What You Do:

1. Have your child use gold, red, yellow, and orange crayons to color and completely cover her paper with a thin layer of crayon.
2. Pour the tempera paint into the paint dish. Help your child paint over her crayon picture. The paint should completely cover the paper. Let the paint dry.
3. Cut out leaf shapes from the paper. Using the toothpick, have your child scratch a border around the edges of the leaf, and leaf veins in the center of the leaf. As she scratches off the dark green paint layer, the autumn colors underneath will be revealed, creating a beautiful piece of art.

Take this opportunity to explain to your child how this is a model of what real leaves do in the fall. They lose their green coloring and show their true colors! This project makes a beautiful piece of art for a wall or for a card to send.

