

Art in the Winter Garden

Overview: Want to put a new spin on your outdoor winter fun? Sparking far more creativity than the typical snowman, introduce your students or family to the work of sculptor and photographer Andy Goldsworthy; then let your imaginations go wild in your own winter garden.

Materials:

- An assortment of natural materials
- A camera to document creations

Approximate Time to Complete: 15 minutes +

Location: Outdoor

Ages: All Ages

Season: Winter (but can be adapted to any season)

Instructions:

1. Introduce your students to the work of sculptor and photographer Andy Goldsworthy. He is a British artist who uses natural materials such as snow, ice, twigs, stones, flowers, pinecones and any other interesting materials offered up by nature to create sometimes simple, sometimes complex, but always beautiful artwork. His book, *A Collaboration with Nature*, is a great resource and has quite a few snow and ice creations to get your creative juices flowing. You can also view samples of his work online, for example in the Digital Catalog (<http://www.goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk/>) hosted by the University of Glasgow in cooperation with The Crichton Foundation.
2. Next, dress for the weather and head into your schoolyard or garden to challenge your budding artists to create their own Goldsworthy inspired artwork. Let their imaginations run wild and work off some of that "been stuck inside too long" energy!
3. Document their art work. To increase the fun, of the activity, here are a couple of ideas for making this activity extra special:
 - Hold a gallery opening! Invite students from other classes, friends, and neighbors to stroll through your creations. Create pathways by shoveling snow, lining them with sticks, or sprinkling flour colored with food coloring and provide a program of the inspirations or messages of the various installments. Serve hot cocoa to help everyone stay warm and tasty!
 - Take photos of the sculptures with a digital camera. Try taking a series of photos at different times of day in different light, or over time to show the progression of melting or decay. Use the photos to create a display for the school cafeteria or hallway, or use them to make cards or calendars for gift giving.
4. Weather too cold? On particularly chilly days, venture out just long enough to collect a variety of natural materials. Provide your young artists with a small baggie or pail and let them know they can only collect what fits inside and from things nature no longer needs. Bring the items indoors and let students create table top sculptures with their found materials. Using a piece of cardboard or a paper plate as a base will make it easier to move the creations once they are completed.

5. Here are some additional extensions of this activity if you want to move beyond the arranging of natural materials:

- Although Andy Goldsworthy likes to limit himself to natural materials and colors, add some color and interest to your winter sculpture park by filling small spray bottles with water colored with food coloring or environment-friendly paint. Use them to "paint" parts of your snow or ice sculptures, adding color to what may otherwise be a very monochromatic landscape.
- Andy Goldsworthy is also known for his art installment Midsummer Snowballs. This was a series of 6 foot diameter snowballs, placed on street corners throughout London one hot July day. As the snowballs slowly melted, they revealed hidden bits of nature such as pinecones, fallen leaves, and seed pods. If you have the freezer space to spare, a smaller version of this snowball feat might be a fun way to conjure up the thrill of a winter snowstorm during the summer. Check out his book Midsummer Snowballs for more on this unique installment of what some would call "performance art."
- Ever find pictures in the clouds? Use the same method to encourage students to look around their schoolyard or neighborhood to find "pictures" in the natural snow sculptures created when snow piles up on branches, wood piles, mailboxes or anything else in the outdoor landscape.