

PLANTS: INTEGRATING THE LESSONS

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An Art Skills Tutorial

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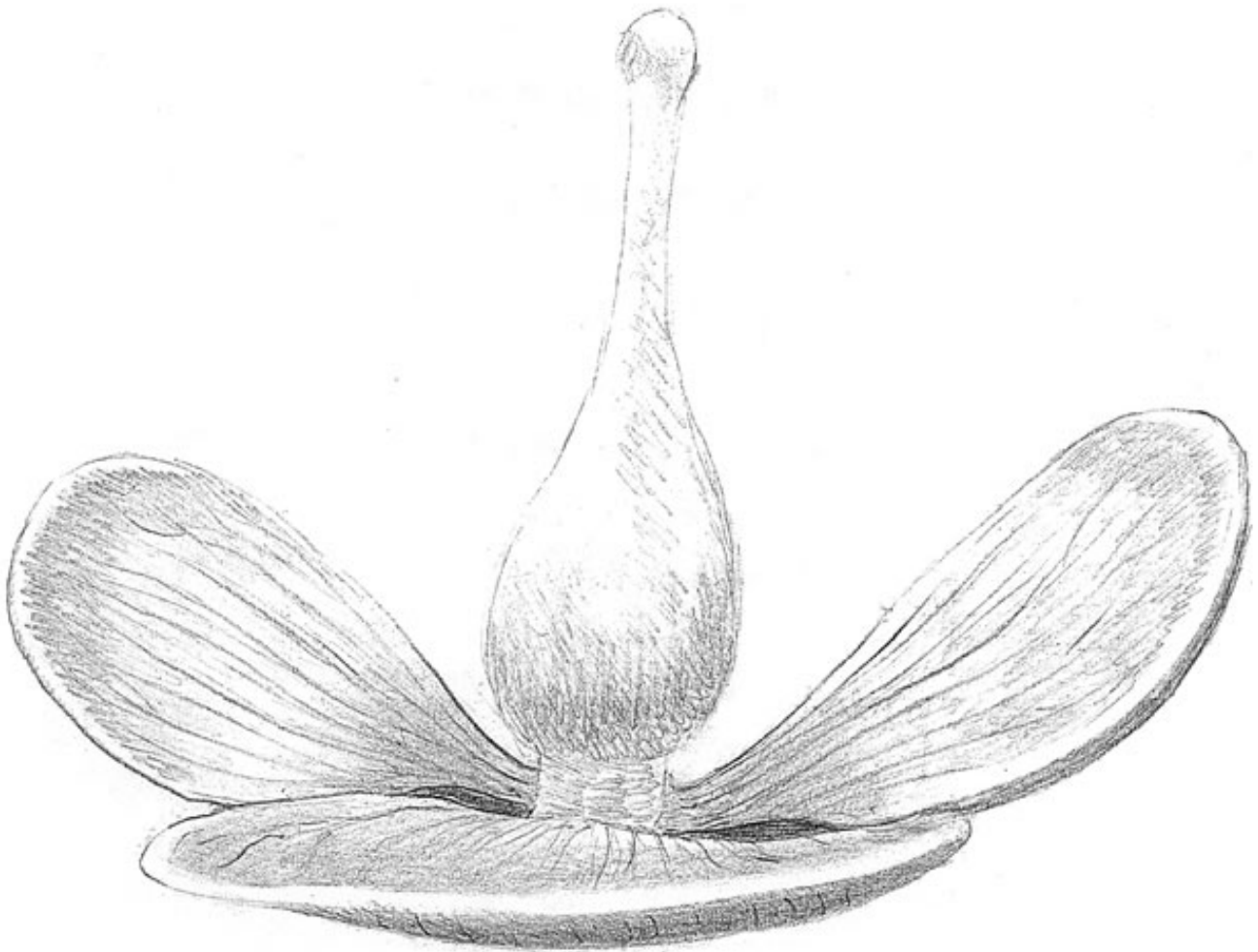
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VOLUME

This drawing was done of a model of a flower.

The central pistil has a spherical part at its



bottom. There is also a smaller spherical shape at its top.

(See Basics lesson about Volume.)

FORESHORTENING

The front petal that is facing the viewer is foreshortened. Were it to be taken out of context, you would not recognize it to be a petal.

The symbolic shape of a petal in our mind's eye is very different from the actual shape we see when directly in front of a form that comes towards us.

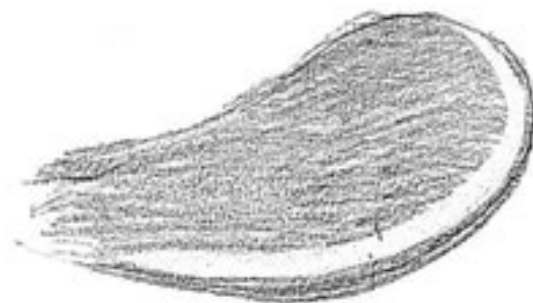


(See Basics lesson about Foreshortening.)

SHADING — POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

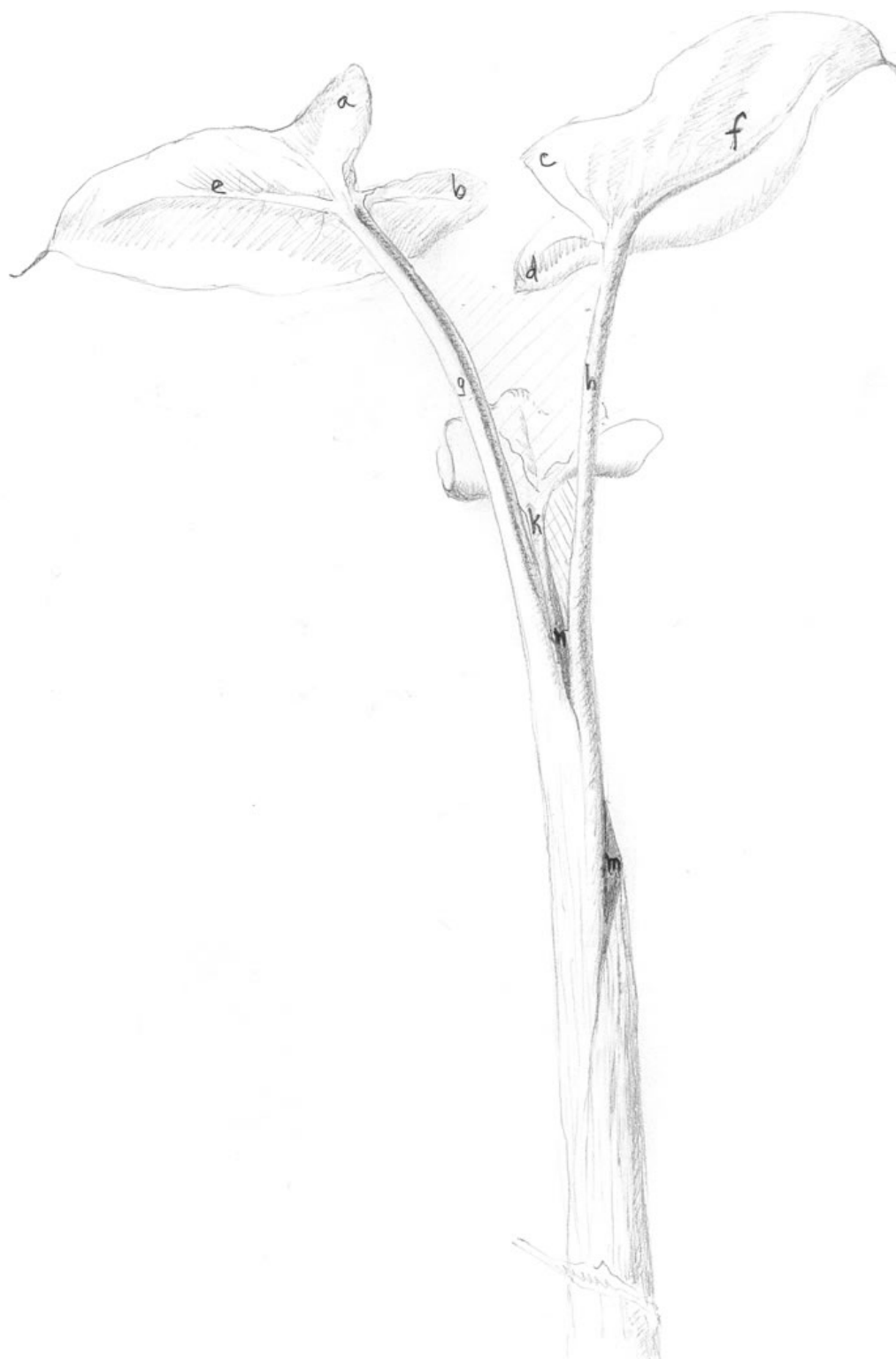
The highlighted edges of the petals were created both by coming up to the edges with shading and by drawing negatively with an eraser. The advantage of the former is that a soft edge is created that makes a gradual change, better reflecting the gradual curvature. Where the two values meet a line of sorts is created. If we used a line to mark where the values change, it would be too sharp.

The darkest shadow you will find on this model of a plant will be underneath the petals.



In order to clarify the space between the petals I chose to make the blank shapes dark, making the edges of the petals clearer.

STAGES OF GROWTH — BUDDING



MINDPRINTS

Below I detail the process by which the previous drawing was done, the “mindprints”, or traces of the mind, in words.

The drawing itself could also be called a “mindprint”, but visual rather than verbal.

I have abstracted a number of principles that are applicable to any drawing you do regardless of subject.

Before you read the list I have compiled, try to make your own list after reading the details of this particular one.

PRINCIPLES

- *Decided to orient the paper vertically to best fit this subject.*
- *Started at the top to be sure the leaves would fit. I could better afford some stem to be cut off than the leaves.*
- *Approximated the sizes of the leaves.*
- *Calculated mentally the number of leaf lengths per stem.*
- *Checked by holding a pencil at arm's length, marking off the size of the leaf and then,*
- *holding that distance, moved it along the stem to check my mental calculation.*
- *Started with the top left leaf.*
- *Observed how its stem crosses over the lower edge of the leaf.*

- *Checked angles of various points to one another.*

The top line of the leaf is curved, but essentially horizontal.

- *Checked the angle between “a” and “b”.*
- *Repeated the same for “c” and “d” of the other leaf.*
- *Found the center vein; looked at their angle and curvature. (“e” and “f”).*
- *Noted how the stems came together with regard to their overlapping and thickness.*
- *Noticed the shape of the negative space between the stems “g” and “h”.*

That space is lightly indicated with hatched lines.

- *Decided how the third leaf was placed between the first two that were drawn.*
- *Noted the shape of the negative space between “h” and “k”.*

The space between the right leaf and the center one is indicated lightly with cross-hatching.

- *The outer, oldest stem on the right has the most pronounced vertical lines.*

It is starting to dry out. Its leaf, in the center, is the shortest.

- *The left most stem is the middle one regarding sequential growth of the plant.*
- *Picked out the rounded forms and checked for which side had the darkest values.*

- *Then I shaded these accordingly.*
- *I chose to use cast shadows, (“m” and “n”).*

Shadows cast by one object upon another, can be confusing.

Feel free to omit them if they confuse the form you are trying to explicate.

DECISIONS MADE FOR THIS DRAWING



What follows is a description of the thinking processes involved in the creation of this drawing.

Again, these can be applied to many other subjects.

- *Because the buds did not show well from above, I chose to draw the underside of the leaves where the nestled buds could be seen at the point where the leaf branches out from the stem.*
- *In order to do this, I took a seat on the ground.*

Even so, I found it necessary to hold the branch to better see the essential parts.

- *For clarity, I darkened the undersides of all the leaves, even those that faced up.*

We normally see shadows on the underside and lighter tops.

You might want to note this decision in your journal, so you know what your lighting scheme indicates.

- *The veins were more pronounced on the underside of the leaves. I minimized their trace on the top of the leaves.*
- *I made a special point to draw each leaf end clearly, as this is an identifying characteristic of different types of leaves.*
- *Lastly, I quickly suggested the dots on the stem.*

I thought of it more as a notation, rather than trying to treat it in painstaking detail.

Sometimes you will be lucky enough to find the various stages of growth in one part of a plant.

This was the case here, from the smaller buds to larger and lastly to the opened flower.

If you cannot find them so conveniently located, just find some good example and draw them separately.



DECISIONS TO MAKE FOR ANY PLANT DRAWING

Here are some of the things you will want to ask yourself for any botanical drawing:

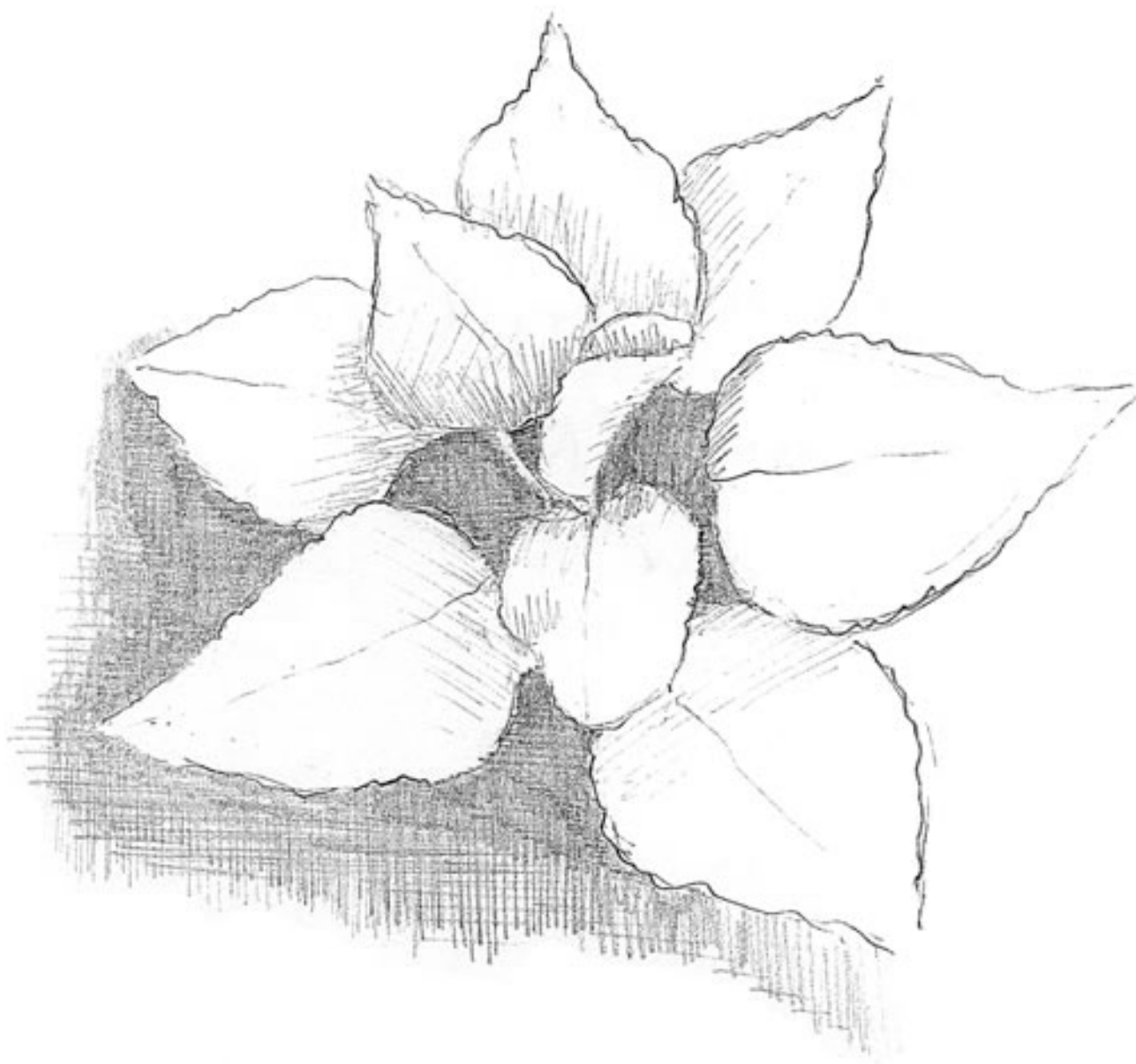
Where is the newest and oldest growth?

Where does the newest growth emerge in the plant's structure?

Where are the main, secondary and tertiary veins and what is their branching structure?

What is the branching structure of the trunks, branches or stems?

How do the buds appear and how do they open. Spirals are often found in nature. Often the buds twist as they open.



PRINCIPLES & CONSIDERATIONS TO NOTE IN THE PROCESS OF DRAWING

What view would best show what I am trying to record?

How will the subject best fit on the page?

Choose a horizontal or vertical alignment of the paper to allow for the most space.

Draw lightly as it allows for easy adjustments.

Check for angles between the major points of your subjects.

Lightly mark those points on the paper as a memory guide.

Observe the shapes made by the negative spaces.

Check proportions, i.e. the relative sizes, of your subjects.

This means checking for the sizes of parts within the object as well as between objects.

Keep cross-checking the basic proportions and placement of the parts of your subjects.

It is better to catch major errors in observation early and start over, if need be.

Analyze the value ranges from darkest to lightest and in between.

Use contrast of values to make clear the different parts of your subject.

There may be areas that you will shade in order to accomplish your goal of clarity, rather than following what you see exactly.

Keep your goal in mind.