



# THE SCULPTURAL QUALITY OF PLANTS

**GRADE:** 9-12

**TIME:** Four 50-minute sessions

Architect Frank Lloyd Wright is well known for his belief that a building should be designed in harmony with the surrounding environment. As a result, Wright often gave careful consideration to landscape design, favoring native plants, natural gardens, and plants that were sculptural or architectural in form. In this lesson, participants will explore the trees and plants favored by Wright and learn how nature study and fieldwork were core components of Wright's educational philosophy. Participants will then create an original wire sculpture inspired by natural forms.

**INTEGRATED SUBJECTS:** Visual Arts, Science, Social-Emotional Learning

## OBJECTIVES

### MATERIALS | RESOURCES

**14" - to 18"-gauge aluminum wire** (Tip: Have several spools for ease of distribution, and allow approximately 10 feet per student)

- Differentiation: We suggest providing light-weight jewelry wire to students who may not be able to manipulate a heavier wire.

**Needle nose pliers**

**Narrow bottles, cans, rocks, or clay to display wire bouquets**

**Sketchbooks**

**Pencils**

1. Discover what influenced Frank Lloyd Wright's educational philosophy.
2. Develop an awareness of how plants and the natural world can create a sense of peace and calm that is important to wellbeing.
3. Examine images or natural objects in order to inspire the creation of a wire sculpture.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How does the inclusion of nature and the environment in or around a home or building affect the wellbeing of the inhabitants?
2. What techniques can be used with wire to create three-dimensional, natural forms?

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## EXPLORE

### Session One

- Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright's home and family farm at Taliesin. More information can be found at <https://www.taliesinpreservation.org/history/>
- Introduce the Taliesin Fellowship and discuss Wright's philosophy of education. More information can be found at <https://franklloydwright.org/teaching-gardens-the-sociology-of-plants/>
- Introduce German educational theorist Friedrich Froebel and discuss how he developed Kindergarten, which is German for "child" and "garden." Early Kindergarteners practiced gardening. Have students consider: What might young children learn through gardening? Share that Wright was educated according to the Froebel principles. Ask: How might Wright's early education have impacted his ideas about architecture, nature, and education? More information can be found at <https://www.froebelweb.org/>.
- Ask students to respond to the idea of plants or nature in their daily environment. Ask: Does having a park nearby affect your wellbeing? If so, how? The following text may provide ideas for improving their school or home environment. <https://franklloydwright.org/5-ways-to-bring-frank-lloyd-wrights-organic-principles-to-your-home/>
  - ◇ Differentiation: Consider that some students may live in an apartment or shared space. Be sure to discuss how environments can improve our mood in those settings.
- Introduce techniques using wire to create the sculptural forms of plants. Demonstrate how to use wire cutters and various methods for bending and securing wire. Ask students to work in small groups to cut about 10 feet of wire for each group member. Wind into a loose loop to store until session 2.

## ENGAGE

### Session Two

- Ask students to research plants and trees from the Midwest. Some of Frank Lloyd Wright's favorites were bur oak and sumac. Tell students that the plants of the desert provide many sculptural qualities. Provide images or actual plants, dried grasses, and flowers. Ask students to draw a variety of forms in their sketchbooks.
- Ask students to focus on Wright's abstraction of natural forms such as sumac leaves from the Dana-Thomas House, the Hollyhock House, and the Tree of Life windows. Encourage students to alter or create new drawings that are abstractions or simplifications of the plant forms.

## DESIGN

### Sessions Three and Four

- Ask students to begin to experiment with their wire. Encourage students to unwind any forms they may want to re-work. Students may want to keep a photographic record of their ideas and solutions. Encourage experimentation with lighting on the forms to create dramatic shadows.
- Students may want to create forms that mimic actual plants and flowers or create more abstract sculptural shapes. Encourage experimentation by wrapping wire around pencils, tubes, or other accessible objects.
  - ◇ Differentiation: Show students photos of wire flowers, such as the examples below.
- Challenge students to create a method for displaying their plants. This may include inserting the sculptures into empty bottles, wrapping the wire around rocks, using clay as a base, or making a wire base.

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- Ask students to present and discuss their finished products, planning sketches, and/or photographs.
  - ◇ Differentiation: Students may consider creating a stop motion short film of plant growth with wire.

## Appendix

