

## TREES

Trees. In almost all landscapes, they play an integral part in the scene. How the trees, grass and foliage are represented in a drawing have a direct impact on the entire mood and success of the drawing. Trees are also one of the most complex and intimidating subject matter to draw.

### GOAL OF LESSON:

- Take a close-up view of trees
- Learn tips and clues on how to draw trees
- Focus on full-foliage trees such as oaks and maples

### REFERENCES:

Without a doubt, the most influential and important reference that I can recommend is Mike Sibley's book "Drawing from Line to Life". He dedicates an entire chapter just on drawing trees. Mike's on-line tree tutorial was the foundation of my learning and understanding on how to draw trees.

The Smithsonian Handbook on Trees is beneficial in providing information on the general shapes and varieties of trees.

### HOMEWORK:

Start where I began by reading Mike's tutorial on trees! He covers material in his tutorial that I have purposely left out of this lesson. Why? Because he says it so much better than I do! Visit [www.sibleyfineart.com](http://www.sibleyfineart.com) – Drawing Trees.

I also have a tutorial on trees at [www.dianewrightfineart.com/drawing-trees-1.htm](http://www.dianewrightfineart.com/drawing-trees-1.htm). There are additional samples that are not covered here. Also stroll through my galleries and pay particular attention to the trees and foliage.

### HAVE YOU HUGGED A TREE TODAY?





What better way to learn how to draw trees than to get up close and personal!!

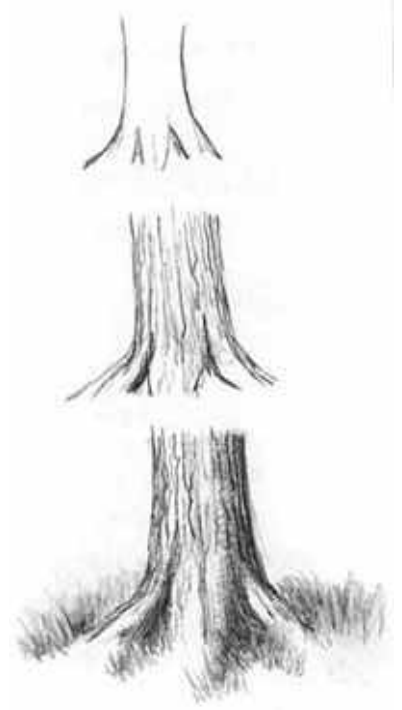
During the past few years, I have spent a lot of time just observing and sketching trees.. It is so important to understand the substructure of a tree. It's like trying to draw the human body without understanding about muscle, bones etc. Here is my analogy — just as elbows, wrists, fingers, knees, ankles and toes are crucial to express the 'flow' of the human body - the joints (limbs, branches, twigs and roots) are crucial in expressing the 'flow' of the tree.

You must feel the texture of the bark in your own hands, you must understand how each leaf attaches to the branches and the branches to the trunk. So our first step is to get up close and personal....

### PLANTING THE TREE FIRMLY IN THE GROUND

How to plant the tree firmly in the ground? I always pay particular attention to this step when drawing. If that tree is not on solid fittings, it will look like it is floating on the paper.

-  Most trees will flair out just as they meet the ground. Emphasizing this flare, and avoiding drawing the tree trunk straight, will give the tree a good base.
-  Remember that trees are actually a cylinder in shape. The shading should represent a cylindrical object. Also the bark of the tree will gradually get more dense on the edges as it wraps itself around the tree. (See sample below).
-  Be sure to put shadow at that base and draw the grass 'around' the trunk.
-  Change and vary the weight of your pencil stroke to help develop depth in your tree. The darker areas should have a heavier weighted line. 'Feel' those shadows go through your hand as you lay down that pencil stroke.





## ASSIGNMENT #1 ROOTS:

Roots - What better way to understand the structure of a tree than to get to the root of the issue! These reference photos offer us an opportunity to draw some interesting and unique tree roots. After drawing these, I guarantee you won't draw a straight line out of the ground to represent a tree again!

<http://www.wetcanvas.com/RefLib/showphoto.php?photo=69861>





## BARK and Branches

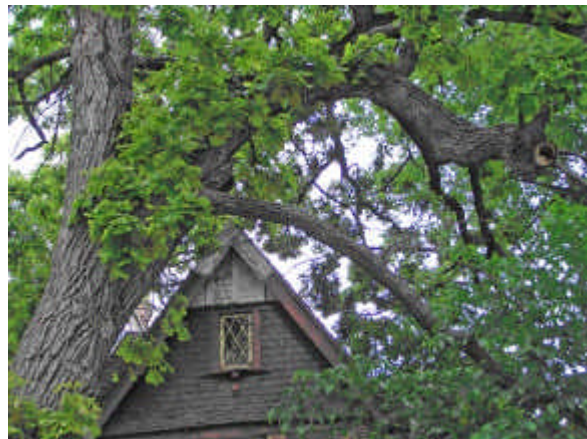
The texture of the tree trunk can vary greatly. Here are a few trees that I have drawn. The level of detail depends how close the tree is in the scene.

Trees are three-dimensional forms, cylindrical in nature that 'branch' off into smaller cylinders. Here is an illustration of a tree branch dissected into cylindrical tubes. The shading should represent a cylindrical object. Also the bark of the tree will gradually get denser on the edges as it wraps itself around the tree.

The texture of the trunk is much more pronounced than on the branches as well.

 Pay particular attention to the 'points of articulation'. This means the point of where every limb attaches to the trunk, every branch to limb and every twig to the branch. This is what helps identify the type of tree it is. Drawing the correct proportions and angles of these points is what 'creates' the tree.

 A common mistake is drawing the branches too straight. Try to identify those knots and kinks, and those bends in the branches. This gives 'life' to the tree. To help see these, it is helpful to observe the negative space between the branches instead of looking just at the branch.

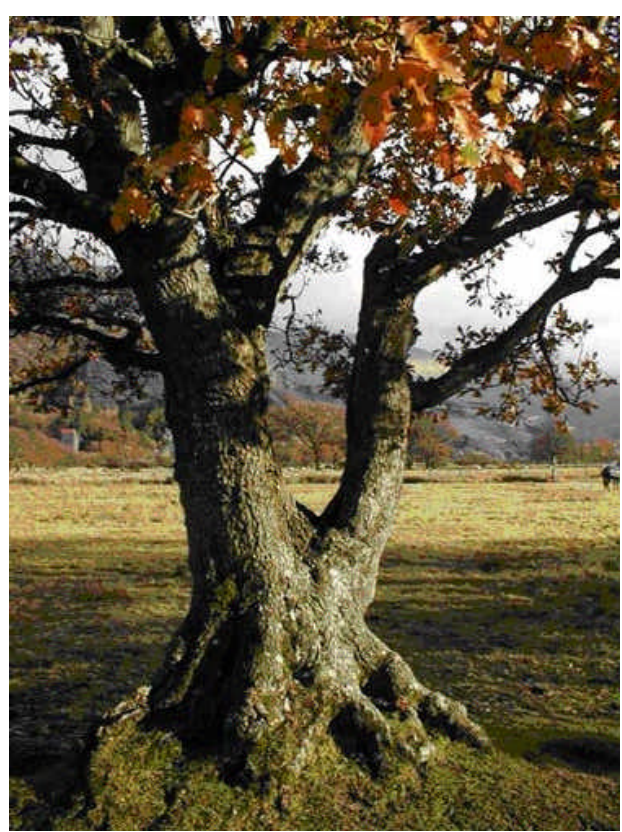


## ASSIGNMENT #2 BARK & BRANCHES:

The purpose of this assignment is to work on the 3-d form. Concentrate on the finding and identifying the elbows and kinks in the branches. Look at the negative spaces (area between the branches) to help with placement. Also, experiment and work on pencil strokes to represent the bark.

<http://www.wetcanvas.com/RefLib/showphoto.php?photo=24481&cat=553>





## Winter Tree:

### Tips for drawing a winter tree

- ✍ Another common mistake is making the branches too thick or too thin for the tree type
- ✍ One more tip...watch the angle of the joints. The angles between the branches should be wider at the bottom of the tree and gradually become tighter at the top of the tree.

### ASSIGNMENT #3 – Winter Trees

The intent of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to look at the sub-structure of trees. Here are a variety of 'naked' trees for you to practice on. Don't feel overwhelmed at all those little branches....you don't have to draw each and every one. Instead draw enough to give the impression and capture the essence of the species. The oak trees have thicker branches than the other varieties.







## LEAVES – Up-close

### ASSIGNMENT #4: Leaves

Study and sketch the leaves, fruit and branches of trees. The purpose of this exercise is to develop an understanding the shape of the leaves, identify characteristics that make it unusual and how they form the leaf bundles. This understanding will assist you in drawing the tree as a whole.

These can be just sketches or completed drawings - the choice is yours.

I have attached a few samples of sketches that I have done. I have also attached reference photos from WC Image Library and some of my own images.











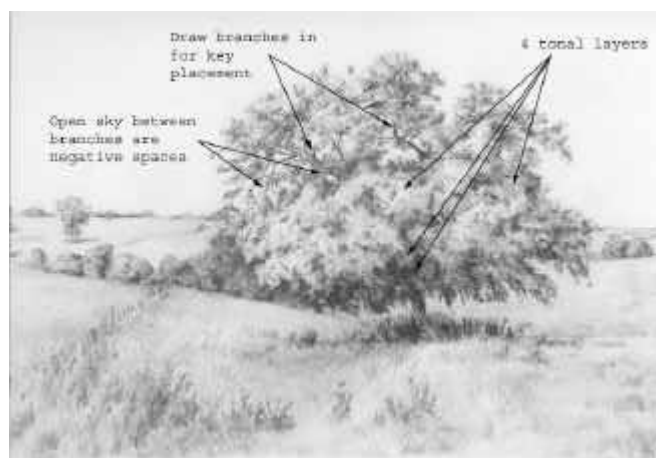
## Full-Foliage Trees

When I draw a tree with leaves, I don't think about drawing each leaf. Instead I am thinking of what kind of 'texture' or pencil stroke I can use to represent that bundle of leaves.

With each variety of tree, the pencil stroke and texture seem to change to accommodate the different leaf variety and how the leaf bundles lay.

### Tips for drawing a summer tree

-  The distance of the tree - background, midground, foreground or up-close - determines the size of the texture and detail placed on the tree.
-  Always, be aware of where your light source is coming from. This will impact how those leaves will look and how the bundles will be shaded.
-  Identify those 'almost' hidden branches and draw them in for key placement.
-  The open spaces between the branches are important to allow the sky to show through.
-  Use a minimum of 4 tonal values.
-  The inside branches will always be darker and can create a lot of depth to your tree.





### **Underhand pencil grip:**

So just how do I draw the foliage on a tree? I use an under-hand pencil grip when drawing foliage. I keep my wrist straight and use full-arm motion. I do not rest my hand on the paper. This will take some practice to control your pencil strokes, but once learned, you will discover your pencil strokes will have more fluidity to them.

I also use .5 mm mechanical pencils, as the tip is just the right size. For up-close leaves or larger areas – I will use a clutch pencil with a chisel point.



### **Pencil stroke:**

The pencil stroke that I use is a scribble stroke. Using the under-hand position, I create a scribble or a short random stroke to create the leaves. I build up the areas to create texture that will represent the leaf bundles.

In the shadowed areas I press harder creating darker areas.

A tree is never outlined or solid. Those outside leaves and branches are critical to the shaping of the tree

I keep the trees airy – leaving more openings than the reference photos show.

I use a battery-operated eraser to restore the lightest leaves or to give sun-kissed highlights to a tree.



### Assignment 5:

Practice the scribble pencil stroke using the under-hand pencil grip. Draw the branches first to give you a sense of where you are. Save the white spaces (sky showing through). In these areas notice that the leaves are actually darker. The inner branches will be darker than the outer branches.



### ASSIGNMENT #6 – Full-Foliage Trees

Select one or more of these trees to draw. Two of these trees are also in the winter tree photos. Can you match them up?





