

Pen and Ink/Technical Pen Illustration (Line and Tone)

Good for scientific identification. Line work in black or sepia can look effective juxtaposed with a full colour portrait, and a watercolour wash on a line drawing can result in a quicker botanical illustration with a fresh simplicity.

Tools needed: permanent, waterproof technical pens with a range of point sizes e.g .05 to .5; smooth cartridge paper or hot pressed paper. If the illustration is to be given a colour wash, tape down or stretch the paper first as for watercolour painting to avoid the paper puckering.

General Preparation

Cut the stems under water, once indoors, to prolong them, then place in a jar of water or wet oasis. (if the oasis is placed in a bowl of water, it keeps it soaked)

Illuminate subject from upper left if possible. Place it a eye level or just below eye level if necessary. The scale of the drawing should generally be life size. Mark in the stem axis first. Then draw the flower heads as they change position quickly in response to the light source, followed by the position of the leaves and their angles to the stem (a midrib line will indicate this).

Study or draw quick sketches of the leaf/flower structure to gather information which will help later. For complex leaf venation a high contrast scan or photocopy of a leaf can give graphic clarification.

Draw lightly in pencil first indicating the middle and darker areas of tone if a doing a tonal pen and ink, to illustrate contours and depth. Since pen and ink tonal work will take time, this is an important stage of information gathering. This pencil drawing will be gently erased on completion of the full illustration.

Line Drawing Only

For diagrammatical illustration, as opposed to a plant portrait. Good for depicting clear structural information. Different nib sizes can be used very effectively to convey 3D form e.g. fine line for highly lit edges, receding edges further away from view, minor veins, delicate petal veining, hairs. Thick lines for shaded edges, edges closer to the viewer, central midribs. Extra line work can be introduced for contours and characteristic details. N.B. varying pressure on a nib can produce varying thickness of line, which can be useful.

Tonal Drawing

Here you will need to interpret the plant and decide which type of 'mark making' shading you are going to use. e.g. hatching only, stipple only or a combination of both. Personal choice and style come in here too.

Tonal drawings have a more naturalistic appearance, as 3 tones can be used to show form quite easily working from light to dark e.g. for smooth rounded stems leave $\frac{1}{3}$ untouched for the lightest area nearest to the light, shade in the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$, then intensify the darkest side further from the light by $\frac{1}{3}$, giving 3 tones to result in a rounded appearance.

Some blocking/filling in can be done for very dark areas.

Overlaps Show areas of shadow where planes overlap e.g. the stem area immediately below an over- hanging leaf. Generally each plane is darkened where it is overlapped by another.

Light coloured veins can be show by stippling around/alongside them, leaving them white.

Correcting mistakes Gentle scratching out with the side of a scalpel blade, followed by rubbing over the area with the bowl of a small spoon to flatten (burnish) it, is worth a try. Alternatively white gouache paint/acrylic ink may do the trick.

TIP: For less botanical studies of a freer nature, try using a non waterproof pen followed by a watercolour wash. The pen will bleed into the paint, which for bold flower subjects yields interesting effects.