

# Make Your Own Sun Prints

Anna Atkins was a botanist who used a unique type of photography to document her work. Celebrate her birthday by creating some amazing images of your own.

## Collect

- Acrylic paint
- Large paintbrush
- Spray bottle of water
- Bucket of water
- Small square of white cotton fabric
- Piece of cardboard (slightly larger than the fabric square)
- A sunny day



## Go on a botany hunt

1. Take a walk outside and search for any flowers, leaves, sticks, or plants that might make a good image.  
*Hint: If it is too early in the season to find flowers outside, try looking for evergreen needles, pinecones, old leaves from the fall, or even fresh herbs you might have around the kitchen.*

## Prep the paint and fabric

2. Lay a piece of cardboard on the ground in a sunny area outside.
3. Since regular acrylic paint is a little too thick for this activity, add a small amount of water to your paint to make it a little runnier.
4. Dip the piece of fabric in the bucket and let it soak up some water. Gently wring out any excess water, and then lay the fabric flat on the cardboard.

## Create your image

5. Brush the fabric with watered-down paint until it is completely covered. If the fabric starts to dry out, use the spray bottle to keep it damp.
6. Arrange the botanical items you found on top of the fabric. Let it sit undisturbed for a few hours or until it's dry to the touch.
7. Remove the items from the fabric to see what happened!

## Who is Anna Atkins?

Anna Atkins combined science and art by publishing photographs of algae, ferns, and other plants for scientific purposes. Her photographic images were created through a method known as cyanotype. Cyanotype pictures use paper coated with a special light-sensitive chemical that reacts to the ultraviolet light in sunlight. When exposed to UV light, the paper remains dark blue. However, if there's an object on the paper that blocks the light (like a fern leaf), that part of the paper turns white - capturing the image of the object. Instead of using a chemical reaction to make a botanical print, your prints used the sun's heat (not light) to create an image through evaporation.

