Art Thief

What you need
Watercolors, water, torn piece of sponge, a paper towel, a flat brush (size 4, 6 or 8)

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Painting trees with this technique is so fun and easy, that you will want to paint several.
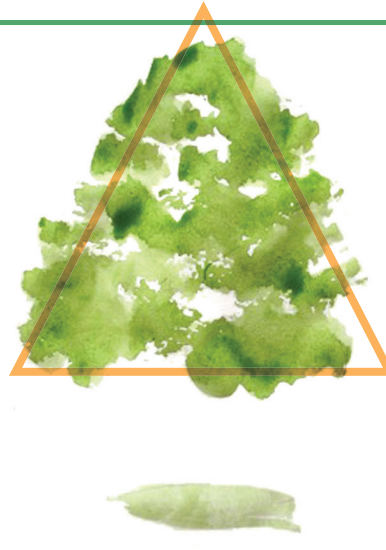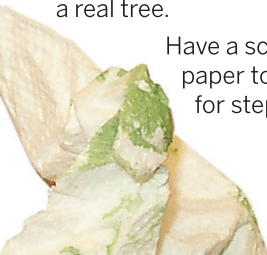
The clumps of foliage created by the sponge are unpredictable, so be willing to adapt to each happy accident your sponge makes.

If you are not yet confident painting a lot of branches, try painting the trunk and only one or two branches.

easy versions

1 Mix a good-size puddle of green paint. Be sure there is plenty of pigment in your puddle. Our color combines yellow-green with brown and a touch of black. This sponge is cut from a kitchen sponge. If possible, rip your sponge to create the ragged edges that simulate the uneven edges of a real tree.

Have a scrunched paper towel ready for step three.

2 Saturate a sponge with the paint and begin dabbing your paper in roughly a triangular shape. Be sure to leave some areas white. No two trees will look alike, so relax if your sponge dabs look different. The swoosh at the bottom is a little shadow beneath the tree.

Wait about 30 seconds.

3 After the paint has saturated the paper but before the paint is dry, take the crumpled corner of a paper towel and press it firmly into the middle of several of the clumps of leaves. These highlights are the outermost leaves on the tree.

All of your branches will go behind, not over, these areas.

4 Next we will add shadows to the bottom portion of several of our leaf clumps. Mix a darker shade of green, and, with the edge of your sponge, carefully add small areas of shade to your tree. This step really makes the highlighted leaves pop.

You may want to lightly pencil in where the tree limbs will go.

5 With a little practice, you will master the use of a flat brush for tree limbs. Pull the brush sideways for the thinnest limbs and on its broad side for the trunk. The bark just beneath the canopy will be darkest.

6 With the broad side of your brush, finish the trunk of the tree in a lighter shade of brown/black. Add a little green shade behind the base of the trunk.

You have completed the tree.