

Murals are an ideal way to decorate a dull empty wall space and, as they are relatively cheap to make, you can recreate them as often as you like. Despite their name, they don't have to be on walls – they're also an ideal way to improve the look of wooden and chain-link fencing. Creating murals is fun for all concerned and can involve from just one or two pupils right up to the entire school.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Art & Design

KS1 – 1abc, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd
 KS2 – 1abc, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd
 KS3 – 1abc, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd

PSHE

KS1 – 1abc, 2abcd, 3abcde, 4abcd, 5acdfgh
 KS2 – 1ab, 2abcdef, 3g, 4adfg, 5acfg
 KS3 – 1b, 3abcj, 4c

HOW TO CREATE a Painted Mural

For the Growing Schools Garden, Godwin Primary School in Essex produced a Friendship Stop mural showing a line of children standing at a bus stop. Children who are on their own at breaktime can wait here for a member of the Playground Squad to collect them and find them someone to play with.

Most murals are painted onto masonry, concrete, brick or stone walls, though these need to be in good condition. However, Godwin Primary used marine plywood, which is specially treated for outdoor use. Wood can be painted indoors and then bolted to any external wall. In addition, one mural can be made up of several timber panels, enabling more children to be involved.

The most long-lasting murals are those painted onto well-prepared surfaces. This means smoothing any rough or pitted surfaces by rendering them with a good outdoor-quality plaster. Sand down the surface of marine ply. Then wipe each board and paint with a suitable waterproof primer. Then apply a weatherproof undercoat.

Once this is dry, mark out the design in soft pencil or chalk, traced from a full-size drawing, or by using a slide or overhead projector to project the design onto the wooden surface. If the design needs to be cut out of the panel, it should be done at this stage, before painting.

Acrylics and emulsions are the easiest and cheapest paints, and become impervious when dry. Acrylics have no fumes, are available in a wide range of colours and will last up to 10 years in good conditions. They are available from most DIY stores and also from education suppliers. Emulsion paints have a similar lifespan and are slightly cheaper. Mineral paints last longer, but are quite expensive.

HOW TO CREATE a Textured Panel

Long Eaton Community School in Derbyshire made three mural panels for the garden, from recycled materials, illustrating various life cycles. The panels were constructed on a base of square wire mesh using scrap plastic bags.

Once the theme for your mural is agreed, get the pupils to draw the finished design in colour to scale on squared paper (you may find it helpful to blow this up to A3 size on a photocopier). Bear in mind that the simpler the design, the greater the impact - and also the easier to make.

Cut the wire mesh to the desired size and tape over the sharp edges. Cut the plastic bags into long strips and separate them into different colours. The strips need to be wide enough to fill the holes in the mesh so they hold firmly. Then transfer the design to the mural, which is quite simple, if laborious.

Starting from one end of the wire mesh, with the design in front of you so you can count the squares, thread a strip of plastic through the mesh from the topside passing it under the wire and up through the second hole to make a loop. The plastic should be pulled tight across the bottom of the mesh, but left loose sticking out of the top. Cut off any excess plastic.

Repeat this process, threading a strip of plastic down through the second hole and up through the third. Continue this process working systematically from one side to the other, using different colours to create the picture.

1 Prepare the surface for the mural



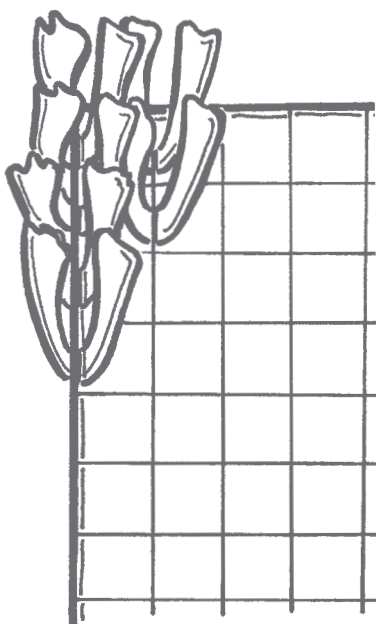
2 Trace the picture onto the wall



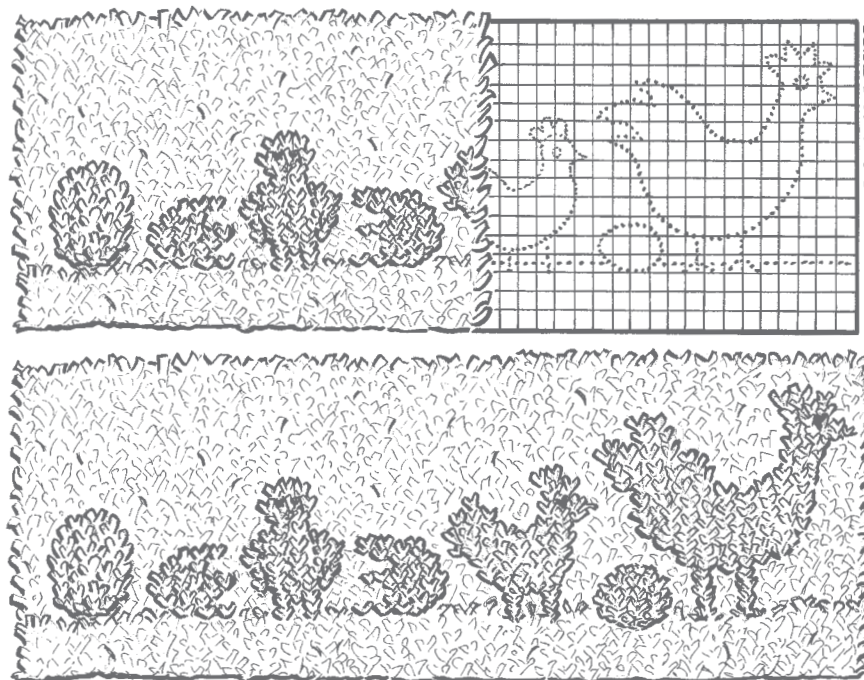
3 All the children can help to paint the mural



1 Thread the plastic strips



2 Gradually build up the textured panel picture



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more ideas: **MURALS IN SCHOOLS** by Carol Kenna and Steve Lobb published by Greenwich Mural Workshop
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