Frederick Law Olmsted

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historic Site
MA

STEAM at Fairsted

As the site of the nation's first full-scale, professional landscape architecture office, we have a lot of examples of creative uses of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math. We would love you to try out some thing inspired by the happenings of the Olmsted office!

What did the Olmsteds do?

Copies were essential at the Olmsted office. Clients, park superintendents, ground crews, etc. all need to see what was going on. Instead of asking their draftsmen to draw multiple plans, the Olmsteds embraced the latest technology- blueprints.

Blueprints were first created using the sun as the agent for chemical change on light sensitive paper. Later, they invested in a Wagenhorst, an electric blueprinting machine, which brought the strength of a carbon arc light inside Fairsted.

What can you do?

Supplies needed:
Sunprinting paper (commercially available)
Tub of water
Flat surface with direct sunlight
Something to copy!

Directions:
1. Find 2-3 objects on the ground, such as leaves or sticks. Or, use a piece of thin paper, tracing paper or tissue paper works best, and draw a picture (using pen or marker).
2. Place the piece of sunprinting paper blue side up on flat surface.
3. Put your objects on top of the piece of sunpriting paper. Make sure the full paper is in direct sunlight.
4. If possible, cover with piece of clear plexi-glass to prevent the objects from moving.
5. Wait 3 minutes (or longer if the sun is not strong). Wait until the paper is almost white.
6. Remove the objects (and plexi-glass) from the sunprinting paper.
7. Place the sunprinting paper, printed side down, into tub of water. Fully immerse the paper before letting it float.
8. Leave it in the water for at least 2 minutes.
9. Hang or lay flat your print to let it dry.
10. Put the objects back where you found them.
11. Enjoy your blueprint!