

Frida Kahlo's Garden

This kit was inspired by a current exhibit at the Museum of Texas Tech University, "Frida Kahlo's Garden". The exhibit highlights the life, art, and home of Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo (1907-1954). Frida Kahlo was a prolific and important female artist from the early 20th century, and was famous for her self-portraits and use of color. She was married to fellow Mexican artist, Diego Riviera (1886-1957) and together they lived in a large blue house called Casa Azul (Blue House) in Coyoacán, Mexico. Frida and Diego would throw large dinner parties for friends and family at Casa Azul, complete with a feast of traditional Mexican foods all cooked by Frida herself! While Casa Azul was famous in Mexico City for its vibrant color and parties, it also was home to a vast and beautiful garden. Frida took great pride in her garden and loved to grow indigenous Mexican plants like cactus, succulents, and Mexican marigolds. Frida would often incorporate the plants and flowers she grew in her garden into her paintings. The contents of this kit are here to inspire you to learn about Frida Kahlo- her life, her art, and her garden! Have fun!

Paint like Frida!

The first items in this kit are all the supplies you will need to create your own artistic masterpiece! The canvas, oil paints, oil paint brush, palette, and palette knife can be used to paint your own self-portrait. Take a selfie on your phone or use a mirror to try and paint yourself on the canvas with the oil paints. Frida always used oil paints to create her paintings, but if you have never used oil paints there are a few things you should know before you get started! Firstly, oil paint is quite difficult to get out of clothing, so be sure to wear a paint smock or apron before you begin your masterpieces! The oil paints provided in your kit are different than traditional oil paints as they are water soluble paints, and you will easily be able to wash out your brush and palette with water, however, it does still stain clothing! Secondly, a little bit goes a long way! Start by squeezing a pea-sized amount on to your palette and gradually add more as you need it- you'll be surprised how much a little oil paint goes! Try squeezing a few different colors of paint next to each other and mixing them with your palette knife to get a whole new color. You can even use your palette knife to apply paint to your canvas to create dimension and texture in your artwork!

Next, make sure to thoroughly wash your paint brush after you are done painting for the day. The paint brush in your kit is made of real boar's hair and should last you a very long time, if you take good care of it. Here's how: after you are done painting, run your brush under warm water and then load your brush with a mild soap. Rub the soap brush against the palm of your hand in circles, creating a foamy lather. Rinse your brush under warm water. Repeat (if necessary) until your brush is clean. Next, place your brush on some paper towel on the counter until the bristles of the brush are thoroughly dry. Now your brush is ready to use the next time you want to paint! DO NOT soak your brush in water for an extended amount of time- this will dissolve the glue that holds the ferrule (metal part) to the handle and can cause your brush to fall apart!

Lastly, oil paint, unlike acrylic paint or watercolor, can take a VERY long time to dry. Depending on how thickly you apply the paint to your canvas, it could take several days or weeks(!) for your painting to completely dry. Because oil paint is made using oil (linseed oil to be exact!) it is inherently slow drying compared to other paints. Because of this, you have much more time to manipulate oil paint on your canvas before it dries. This is one of the reasons why oil paint is so widely used by artists! Be mindful of how much paint you apply to your canvas, and start by applying thin layers of paint to build up coverage and allowing them to dry in between each application. Have fun creating!

Frida Kahlo: The Artist That Painted Herself

The next item in your kit is a biographical picture book by Margaret Firth about the life of Frida Kahlo. This book details the childhood and career of Frida Kahlo, and explains how she got into art and why she chose to paint what she did. Enjoy reading this book with your parents or sibling and learning about the life and art of one of the world's most famous artists!

From Frida's Kitchen

Next in your kit is a set of custom recipe cards designed and created by the Education Division of the Museum of Texas Tech University. There are 6 easy recipes you can make and share with your family and friends. Each of these traditional Mexican recipes are actual recipes Frida made for her fiestas at Casa Azul!

Frida's Garden

The next item in your kit is a live succulent plant. Succulents are special plants because they are able to store water in their thickened leaves and stems and are considered to be drought resistant plants. This makes them the perfect plant for the hot and sunny climate of Mexico! Frida grew several different varieties of succulents and cacti in her beautiful garden at Casa Azul and tended to all her plants with love and care. Succulents are very easy little plants to take care of and don't require too much- just a little water and sunshine.

Here is how to take the best care of your new little plant friends:

Water

- Only water your succulent when the soil is completely dry. It is very easy to over-water your plant, so make sure the soil is totally dry before you water it again. The climate your plant is kept in, time of the year, and exposure to sunlight will determine the rate at which your soil dries out. Typically, your plant will need less water in the winter and more in the summer, but to be safe check your plant every week to see if it needs to be watered!
- DO NOT use a spray bottle or watering can to water your succulent. Instead, soak your plant. Place your plant in a container and pour in water until it reaches roughly halfway up your succulent pot. Allow your succulent to soak for about 15-20 minutes and then remove your plant from the water and place on a paper towel to drain excess water. This method of watering allows your plant to only take in the water it needs and reduces the chance of your succulent being over-watered.

Light

- Succulents need full sunlight to thrive.
- Place your succulent near a window that gets plenty of sunlight during the day.
- If your succulent leaves appear to fading or drooping, they need more light! Move them to a different location with better light when this starts to happen.

Other care tips:

- It is normal for the leaves at the base of the plant to wilt and die; simply remove these leaves from your plant to allow new, healthy leaves to grow.
- If a healthy leaf breaks off, leave it be! New leaves will replace it!
- Succulents are pet safe and non-toxic!

Delicioso!

The last item in your kit are a few traditional Mexican treats and candies! Mexican candies are quite a bit different than treats you might be used to, and they use traditional Mexican flavors like chile and tamarind to make their candies. Enjoy a taste of Mexico with your family and friends and see how they compare to some of your favorite treats!