

# *How to Draw*

## *Grass & Weeds*



### Intro

Grass and weeds are some of the most challenging nature elements to capture in a landscape drawing. It is seldom the focal point of a landscape, but if not rendered correctly, can negatively impact the rest of the scene. Grass is a supporting actor of the presentation. It should mirror the feeling of the scene, light and wispy for a foggy view, dark and dramatic with lots of texture for a thicker carpet. Grass is never stagnant, it is forever moving. This movement, flow and direction we impose can guide the viewer to where we want to take them, right into the depths of the scene.

## A simple pencil stroke

At the most basic level, drawing grass is just a mark on the paper. Well perhaps two marks, one up and one down. As you start the pencil stroke, the pressure is firm and as you move up, the pressure is lifted so when you lift the pencil from the paper the line is tapered. As you make the mark on the downward stroke, it starts with a heavier pressure and is tapered at the bottom. This vertical “rocking” motion of up/down pencil strokes is all it takes. As you are creating these up/down marks, you are actually drawing the area or shadow between the blades. The white area left is the actual blades of grass. This technique is called negative drawing.



Negative drawing – the pencil stroke is depicting the shadows or the area between the grass blades.



# Practice

Practice drawing various “textures” to depict grass. Here are a few tips:

- Vary the length of the grass. Unless the grass is from a manicured urban lawn, the grass will not be the same length. Varying the length will add interest.
- A slight arch with the pencil stroke will keep the grass from looking stiff and unnatural.
- Add a variety of weeds including broad leaf plants. Again this will add interest to your scene.
- Create light, wispy grass with lighter pencil strokes.
- For a thicker carpet of grass, use shorter, firmer pencil stroke.
- For large sections of grass, use a 4H or 2H chisel point lead and layer a light tone over the area. This will add uniformity.



## How much detail?

So how much detail should be used when depicting grass? Well, that depends on what your landscape dictates. Grass in the far distance is easy as it should be nothing more than a tonal value. Even around the tree in the fore-ground of “Honey Creek”, the grass is little more than a texture.

It isn't until you get to the closest foreground area that you “might” be able to distinguish individual blades of grass. By keeping this in perspective, it makes drawing grass so much easier as it is now just another “texture” added to the landscape.



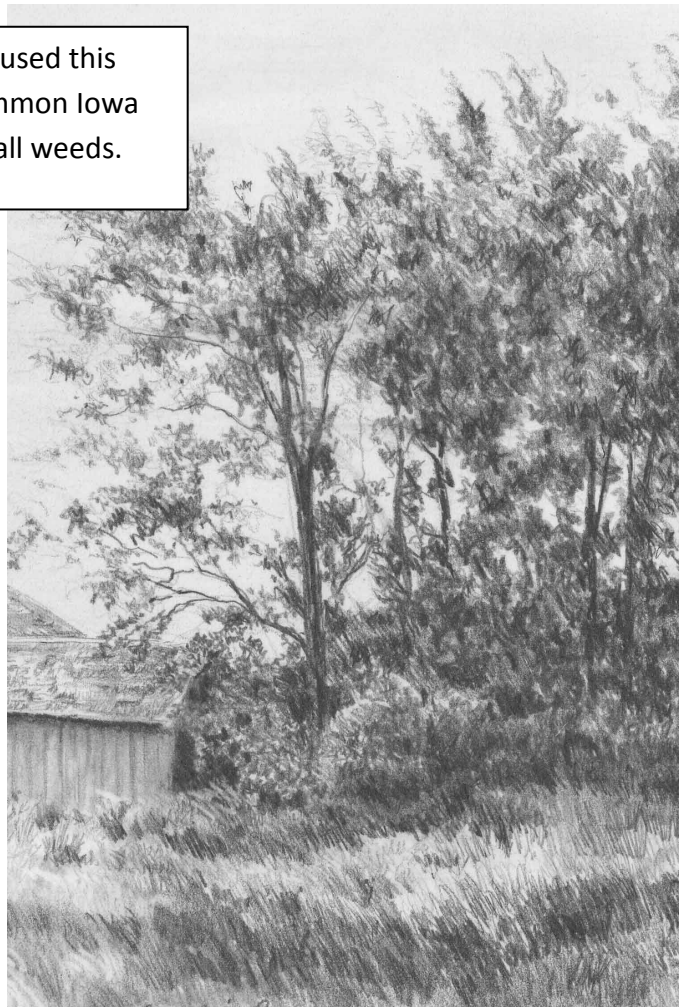
## Where the trees meet the grass

As in any artwork, the area where two objects overlap is critical. How this is rendered can add depth, continuity as well as a bit of mystery or intrigue to your landscape.

A common mistake is creating a straight line dividing the trees and the grass. Instead break up the area so the area is less defined. Weeds and trees are joined by shadows. To keep this fresh and spontaneous – use negative drawing by applying the graphite in the shadows and the areas between the weeds.



The drawing “Madrid Barn” used this technique to depict the common Iowa overgrowth of bushes and tall weeds.



## Short, patchy grass

Add a variety of weeds.

Pasture grass can be short, irregular with areas of ground showing. This can add a lot of texture and interest to the scene.

Vary the pencil marks in size and direction.

This is an example of plotting out the areas of grass versus the ground.

This technique is used in the drawing “Summer Oak”. Short patchy grass is broken up with areas of ground showing. A hint of an uneven path leads the eye to the barn. The grassy areas under the tree are more sparse, leaving the roots of the trees showing. White flowers shimmer in the foreground.



## Long, tall grass

There are occasions when grass is depicted long and overgrown as in this example “In the Weeds”. Neglected grass creates a beautiful long blade. But even in this environment, breaking it up by varying the length is important. The feeling of a windy day is created through the grass movement (the arch and direction of the pencil strokes). An impression of a few shimmering blades was created by the use of a white mars eraser with a sharp chisel edge.

Using a flat chisel point 4H or 2H lead, layer a light tone over an area of grass. This can create areas of grass in shadow or provide uniformity to a section. (See area next to the car)

The approach is to give the overall impression of an overgrown yard – not concentration of depicting each blade of grass.



## Observation

Take digital photos of a variety of grass and weeds. Close observation of their textures, characteristics and growth through-out the seasons will increase your understanding of this seemingly complex subject matter. The better your understanding, the better your depiction of grass will register and ultimately the better your landscape will read.

For learning how to draw detailed grass, I highly recommend reading Mike Sibley's "Drawing Grass" tutorial ([www.sibleyfineart.com/tutorial--draw-grass.htm](http://www.sibleyfineart.com/tutorial--draw-grass.htm))

[www.dianewrightfineart.com](http://www.dianewrightfineart.com)