Leaf and fern silhouettes to print on transparency film

Botanical negative templates

Eight silhouettes drawn for The Cyano Codex, not copied from any plate or photograph. Printed in black on transparency film, they stand in for a plant: they block the light and leave their shape on the blue.

How they work

A photogram is a camera-less image made by placing objects directly on a light-sensitive surface[1]. In cyanotype, whatever gets ultraviolet light turns blue and whatever is covered stays white[2]. A printed silhouette does the same as a leaf, but it's flat: Anna Atkins herself noted that with thick specimens the glass didn't press well and the impression came out imperfect[3].



Pages 2 and 3: black silhouettes. They print white on blue.



Page 4: black cards with a clear leaf. They print a blue leaf on white.

How to use them

1 Print on transparency film

Pages 2 to 4, at 100%, at the highest quality and on the side the film's maker specifies for your printer.

2 Cut out and compose

Cut out each silhouette with a margin and combine them with each other or with real pressed, dried plants.

3 Expose like a negative

Printed side against the paper[4], under glass and with your usual time.

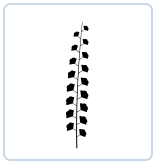
4 Wash and let dry

Until the yellow is gone from the whites; Ware allows about 20 minutes[5]. The blue finishes deepening as it dries, over about 24 hours according to Ware and Jacquard[6,7].

The eight silhouettes



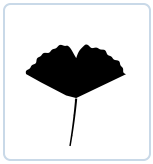
Fern



Fan-leaflet fern



Grass spike



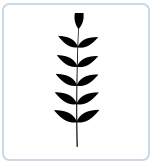
Fan leaf



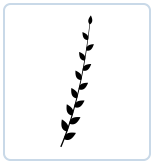
Palmate leaf



Toothed leaf



Compound leaf



Sprig

If the silhouette comes out bluish

The ink is letting some ultraviolet through. Not all inks block it equally: in the printers Reeder and Anderson tested, photo black blocked less than matte black[4]. Print at the highest quality and lengthen the exposure a little, checking it with a test strip.

The silhouettes are nearly symmetrical, so you don't need to print them mirrored. They're geometric drawings, not specific species.

Sources

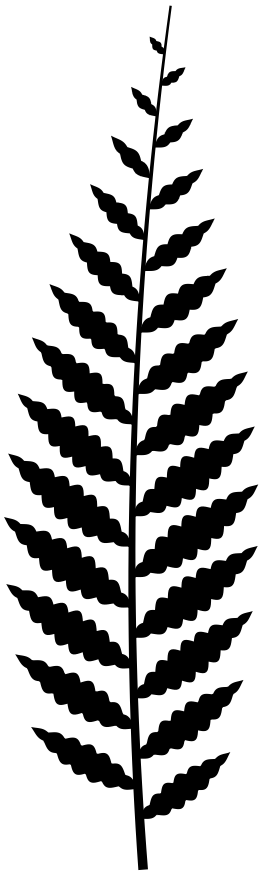
1 J. Paul Getty Museum. (n.d.). Photogram. In Glossary of photographic terms.
2 Redden, H. and Crawford, A. (2025). Anna Atkins and the making of macroalgae cyanotypes and their role in science education.
3 Franchi, S. (2024). Crafting and collecting cyanotypes: Anna Atkins's Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions.
4 Reeder, R. and Anderson, C. Z. (2013). How to make digital negatives [Excerpt].
5 Ware, M. (n.d.). The traditional cyanotype process.
6 Ware, M. (2009). New Cyanotype: Siderotype workshop notes.
7 Jacquard Products. (2021). Cyanotype detailed instructions.

Scan to open the page

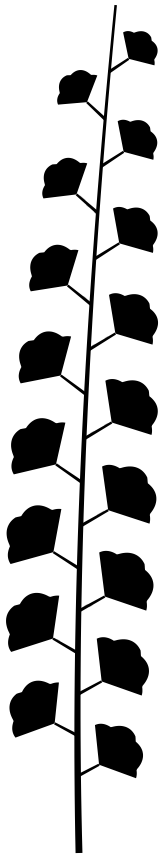
cyanocodex.com/en/downloads/botanical-templates/

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Page to print on transparency film · Large silhouettes



Fern



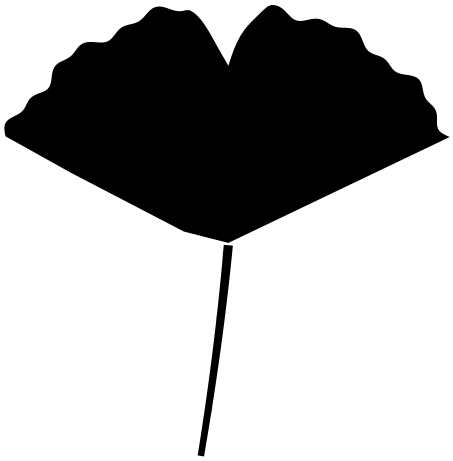
Fan-leaflet fern



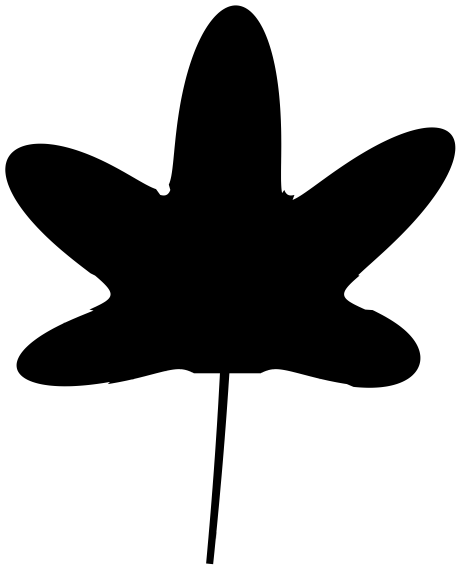
Grass spike

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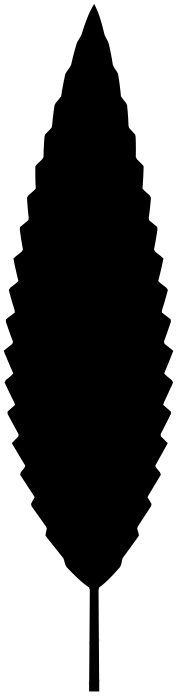
Page to print on transparency film · Leaves



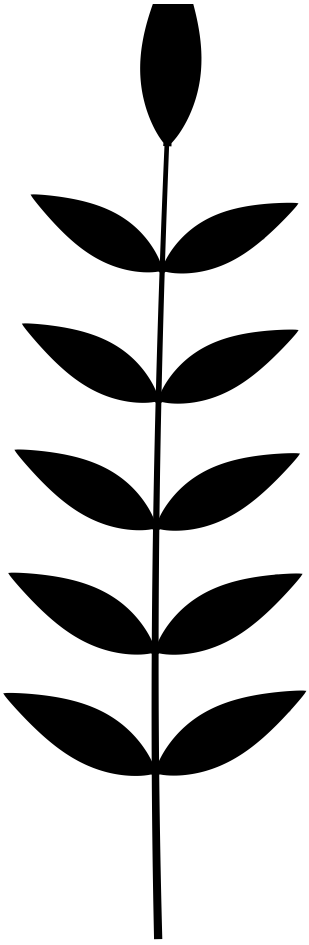
Fan leaf



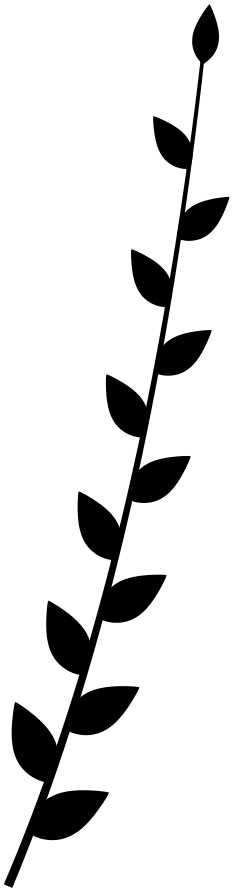
Palmate leaf



Toothed leaf



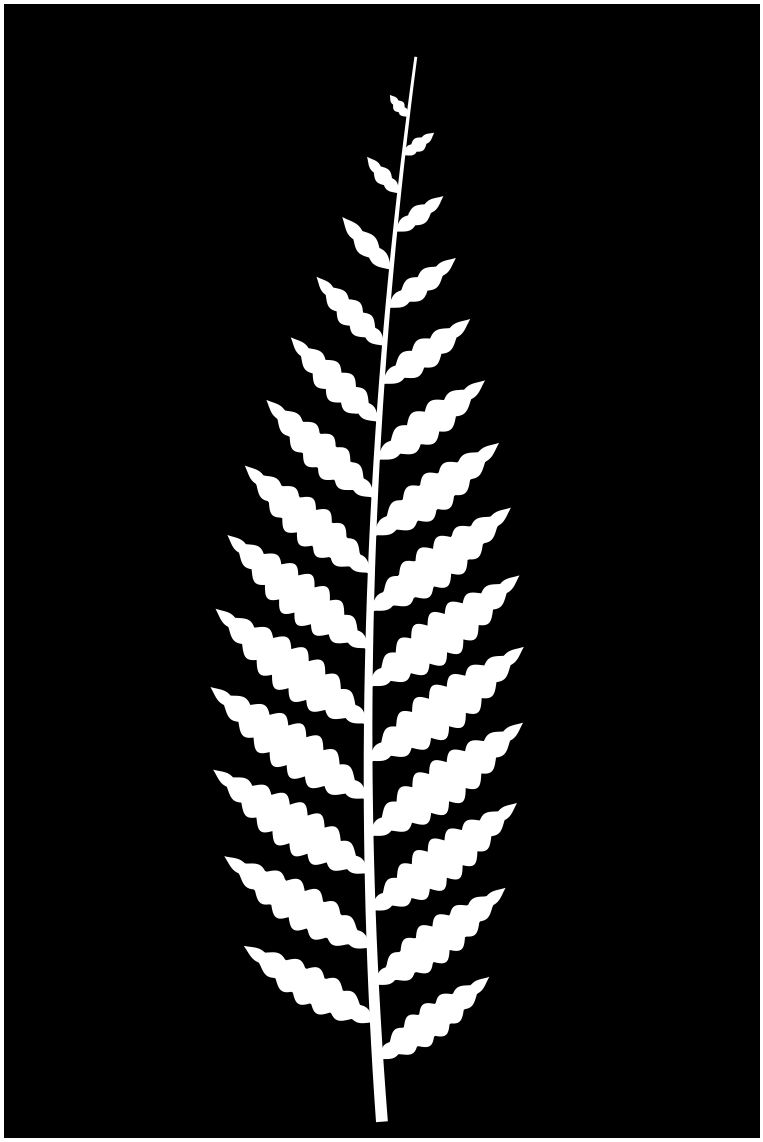
Compound leaf



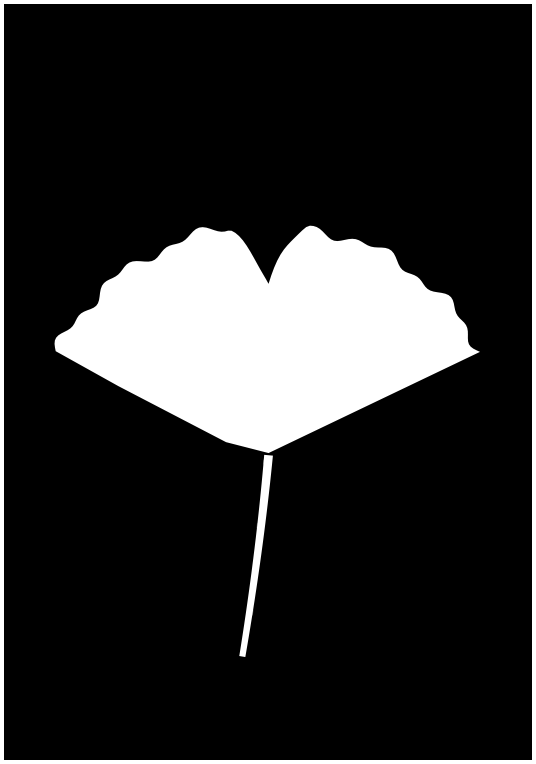
Sprig

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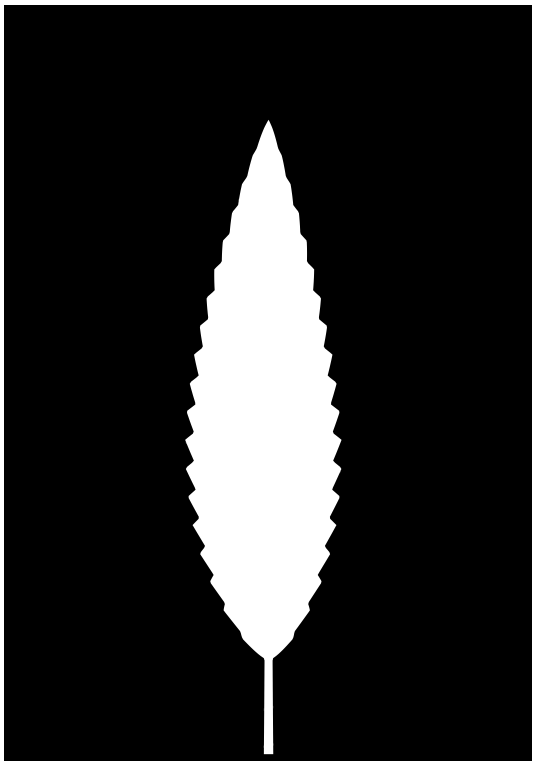
Page to print on transparency film · Reversed cards, 4 × 6 in and 2.75 × 4 in (10 × 15 cm and 7 × 10 cm)



Fern · 4 × 6 in (10 × 15 cm)



Fan leaf · 2.75 × 4 in (7 × 10 cm)



Toothed leaf · 2.75 × 4 in (7 × 10 cm)

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