Science Societies

CANVAS meeting to feature a celebration of soil art

Recharge, spark your creativity, and connect with others

September 10, 2025



Soil painting as an effective way to share soil science knowledge. Photo by Matt Hayes.

At CANVAS 2025 in Salt Lake City, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA will host a multi-day celebration of soil art, featuring workshops on making soil paint and a collaborative large-scale soil painting of the CANVAS logo. The event highlights how soil painting is being used by scientists, artists, and educators to creatively communicate soil science, raise public awareness, and inspire students of all ages. Attendees will gain hands-on experience with soil pigments, explore educational applications, and connect with colleagues through art, science, and community.



A painting titled, "Doggo 1," made with soil and gesso by Kirsten Kurtz

in 2024. Kurtz will host a workshop at CANVAS in November on how to make soil paint.

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA will host a multi-day soil-painting event at CANVAS 2025 in Salt Lake City, UT in November. This celebration of soil art will kick off with a hands-on demonstration of how to make soil paint. Participants will make 50 different soil paints using soil sourced from Brigham Young University's Environmental Analytical Lab and soil samples provided by various members of the Societies. The following day, participants will have the chance to contribute to a large-scale soil painting of the CANVAS logo, which will be displayed during the meeting.

The power and importance of creative communication is gaining traction within the scientific community. One example of this can be found in the use of soil painting as a method to raise awareness of soil science with the public and students of all ages.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recognized soil painting as an effective way to share soil science knowledge with the world at large, evidenced by their International Soil Painting Contest held in 2017. Articles discussing soil art have been featured in *CSA News* as well as many other national and international media outlets. Soil is increasingly being integrated into fine art for purely aesthetic reasons as well as to raise public attention to issues including soil security and sustainable agriculture. There are multiple fine artists and many indigenous communities using soil to create various forms of art. These creations are sold in galleries, on commission, or turned into large-scale public art pieces.

A fun, creative tool for educators

Soil science instructors, extension personnel, and other educators are incorporating soil painting into their classroom's activities and outreach events for a wide range of ages and audiences stretching from kindergarten to the graduate student level to adult

learners. They are using soil painting to teach soil science concepts—including soil texture, mineral sources of soil colors, the Munsell soil color system, soil classification and genesis—in fun and creative ways.



A painting titled, "Polska," made with soil and gesso by Kirsten Kurtz in 2023.

Some educators are relying on ready-made soil-painting kits while others are sourcing soil pigments and creating their own soil paint by mixing soil with glue, gesso, or other binders. There are various instructions for making soil paint available through the NRCS, universities, and other institutions. But there are few, if any, resources available detailing how to hold soil-painting events or create fine art from soil.

The 2025 soil-painting event at the CANVAS meeting will be a valuable opportunity to learn how to teach soil science concepts via art. It will provide hands-on experience creating pigments from soil and, perhaps most importantly, offer a fun chance to interact with colleagues who are passionate about creative scientific communication. All CANVAS attendees are invited to join this celebration of soil art and to learn more about the beauty of the precious natural resource under our feet, the soil.

How to Make Soil Paint Workshop

Monday, November 10 (1–2:30 pm)

Join artist and soil scientist Kirsten Kurtz to learn how to create paint from soil. Learn about soil preparation, supplies, and how to mix the paint, so you can bring this activity to your classroom, lab, or personal studio and share the wonders and natural colors of soil.



Kirsten Kurtz (center) leads a group at Chico State to paint outdoors with soil in 2023. Photo by Jason Halley/Chico State.

Soil Painting Canvases for CANVAS

Tuesday, November 11 (9 am–2 pm)

Take part in a collaborative art experience in the Society Center! Help create a brand new "CANVAS" art piece using soil paint created from local Utah soils on canvases. Recharge, spark your creativity, and connect with other attendees while celebrating the beauty of agronomy, crops, and soils.

DIY Zine Creation Station

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday (9 am–6 pm)

Come visit the Society Center and create your very own mini magazine (zine) from repurposed and recycled materials. Spark creativity and make new friends while making a souvenir to remember your wonderful time at CANVAS in Salt Lake City.

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