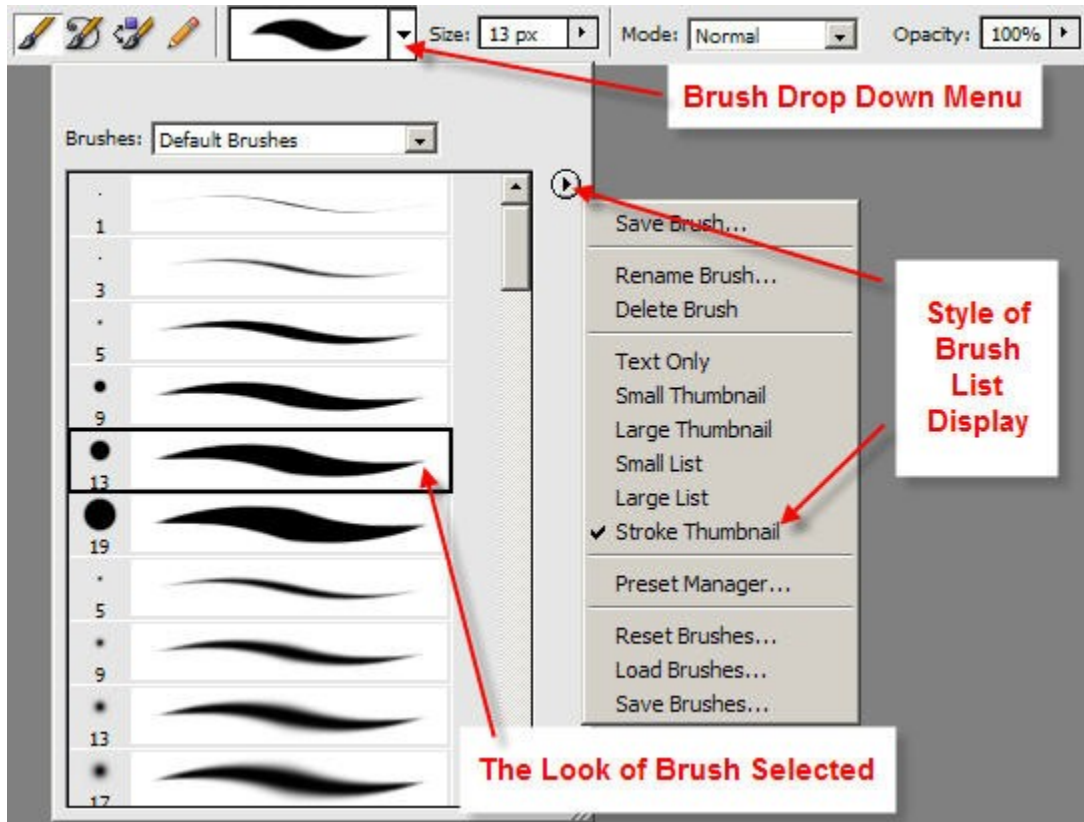


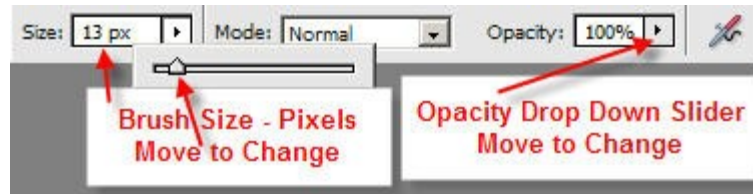
Photoshop Elements SIG – February 13, 2008
by John Durrett

Brushes

Brushes are one of the most basic tool sets in Photoshop Elements. To select the Brush tool, click on the brush icon in the tool bar on the left. You get a selection of brush styles by clicking on the drop down menu triangle next to the black shaped brush stroke. The drop down menu will show a selection of brushes which you can use by clicking on any icon in the drop down menu. You can change the look of the drop down menu by changing the style of the brush list display, as shown in the following figure.



There are further choices in the construction of the brush along the brush options bar at the top of the screen. You can change the brush size by either typing a new number or adjusting the slider bar. I usually work in the Normal Mode, but will vary the Opacity percentage to suit my application. Think of the Opacity setting as thinning the paint. The lower the Opacity setting the thinner the application of color from the brush.



Painting With Brushes

The steps I like to follow in doing a painting are:

1. Select a brush style and size (eg. size 13 soft) to begin painting.
2. Add new layers for each different element of the painting (tree trunk, branches, leaves, ground cover, grass, sky, etc.).
3. Change colors for the different elements by changing the Foreground color using the Color Picker.
4. Adjust the opacity of the brush if necessary to slow the application of paint color.
5. Adjust style and size of the brushes to fit the different elements of the painting.
6. Save the file as a PSD file to save the layers.

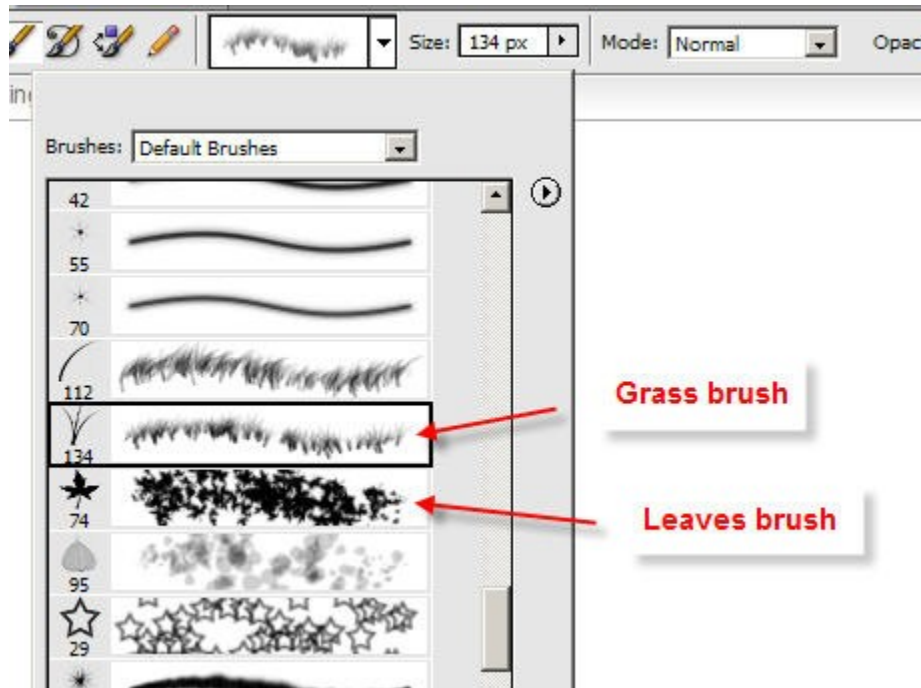
Creating a Painting

Begin by creating a new file. In this example, we use the "Default Photoshop Elements Size", which is 6 x 4 inches at 300 pixels per inch, in the RGB color mode with a White background. While this does create a large file, the higher resolution will be necessary if you want to print the painting.

We will paint a landscape of a tree, with grass and surrounding hills. The first step is to add a new layer in the Layers palette and name that layer "tree trunk". Then select the brush tool from the tool bar, and click on the Foreground color to pick a color for the tree trunk. Change the color of the trunk as you paint by reselecting the Foreground color and using a different location for the Color Picker. I would use a variety of soft brushes and colors to paint the tree trunk.

Then add a layer for the ground and name it "ground cover". Choose a large brush of around 300 pixels that is soft. A soft brush has faintly defined edges and will blend better as you add paint strokes. Select a sand like color (kind of a light yellow brown) and fill in the ground area around the tree. I lowered the Opacity of my brush to around 75% to allow for better blending of the ground area as I laid down the strokes. Just paint right over the tree; it won't matter since you are painting on a different layer. Now click and drag that "ground cover" layer beneath the "tree trunk" layer in the Layers palette. Note how the ground disappears behind the tree trunk. That's the beauty of using layers.

Now I want to draw some grass on the ground. Photoshop Elements has a grass brush as one of the default brushes. Use the drop down menu and find the grass brush. (Later, we will use the Leaves brush.)



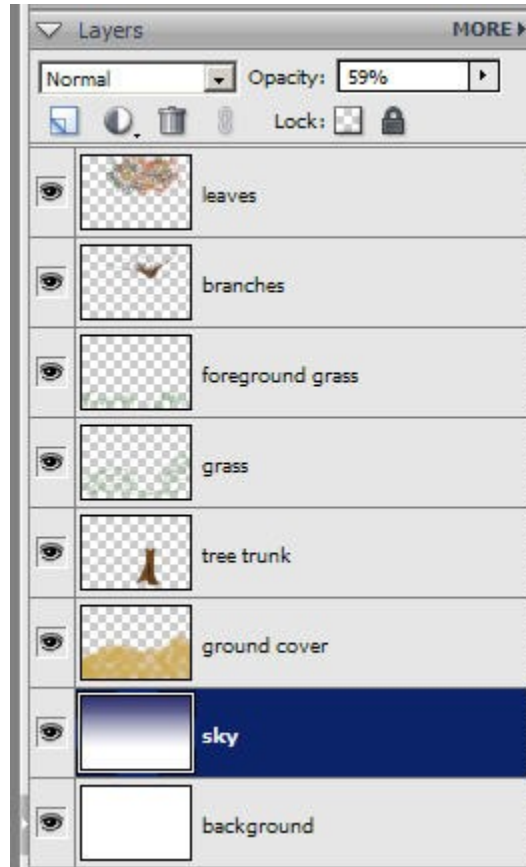
After selecting the grass brush, change the Foreground and Background colors to different shades of green. This grass brush uses both colors, so we need to set them.



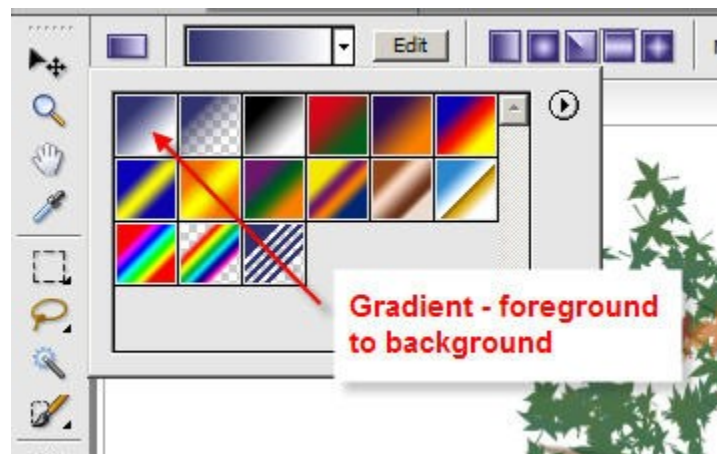
Add a new layer, and rename it "grass". Use the grass brush to paint the blades of grass over the ground. Try changing the size of the grass brush using the brush options tool bar> Add a new layer, name it "foreground grass", and paint some larger grass in the foreground around the tree. Draw in the branches on a new layer, using a brown sampled from the tree trunk. Add another layer and name it leaves.

Reset the Foreground and Background colors to their Default mode of black and white. I like painting the leaves using different Foreground colors. I start with changing the Foreground color to green, and use the leaves brush to paint on some leaves. Then I change the brush color (the Foreground color) to a reddish brown, and then a yellowish brown for a fall leaf effect, adding new leaves in new locations. You can also vary the size of the leaves by changing the brush size.

At this point the Layers Palette looks pretty much like the following, with one exception. In this palette I have added a layer for the sky. Note that I place it beneath the ground cover layer because I do not want the sky color to show through the ground.



To create this effect for the sky, I set the Foreground color to a blue with the Background color remaining white. Then I choose the Gradient tool from the tool bar, and make sure I have the Foreground to Background gradient selected.



Then I click on the sky layer, and drag the mouse from the top of the painting down to just below the ground horizon line while holding down the Shift key. Using the Shift key makes the gradient drag in a straight line down the page. Notice how the color transitions smoothly from the foreground blue color to the white background color.

The final version of the painting might look like the following. It may not be a great work of art, but it is fun to draw and provides good practice using the brush tool with different colors and various brush shapes. You can draw your own version and expand upon this using some of the alternate brush designs within Photoshop Elements.



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