How to create vector artwork

If you want to base a new drawing on an existing image, you can trace it in Adobe Illustrator CS6. For example, you can create a graphic based on a pencil sketch drawn on paper or on a raster image saved in another graphics program by bringing the graphic into Illustrator and tracing over it. There is a broad range of options for image tracing, ranging from a simple silhouette, sketch, or line art to more sophisticated multi-color and photo-realistic conversions. For example, the bitmap image in **Figure 1** uses the High Fidelilty Photo image trace preset option in Illustrator.

The easiest way to trace artwork is to open or place a file into Illustrator and automatically trace the artwork with the Image Trace command. You can control the level of detail and how the tracing is filled. When you are satisfied with the tracing results, you can convert the tracing to vector paths.

After tracing a bitmap image and converting it to vector paths, you will be able to scale the drawing without without it becoming blurry or pixelated. For example, you might want to create a large-scale poster from a photograph. Creating a vector artwork allows you to scale the image up to the maximum size without any loss of quality.

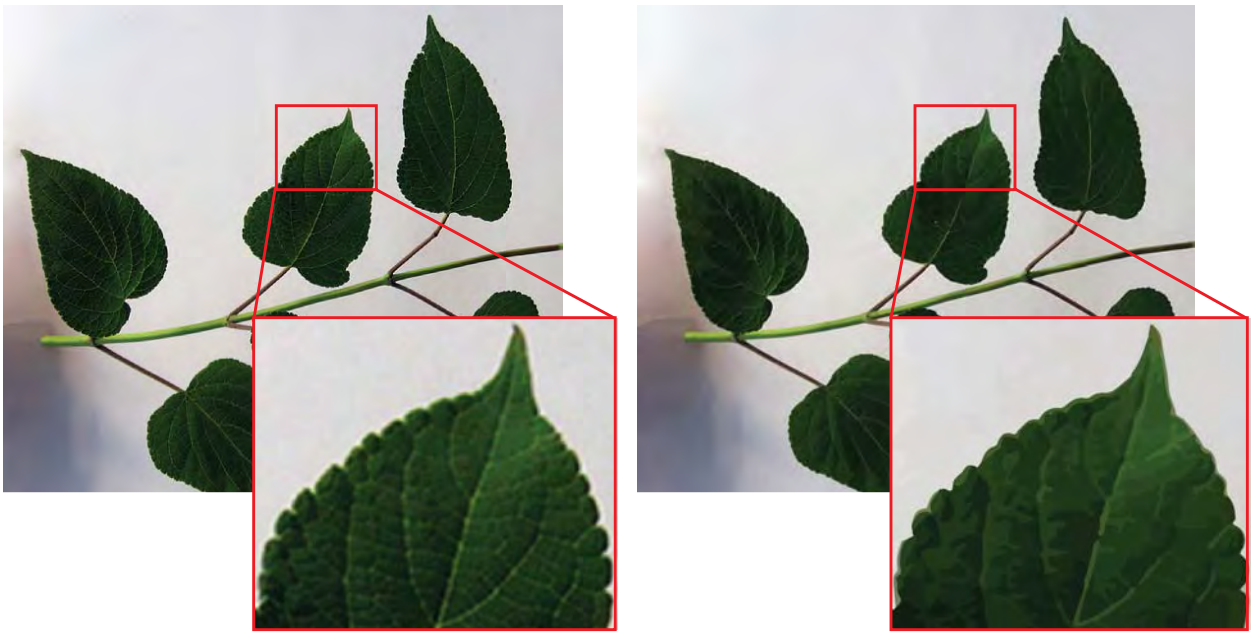

Figure 1 Before and after: tracing a bitmap image with the Image Trace command

To create a vector artwork from a bitmap image:

1. Start Adobe Illustrator CS6.
2. Open or place a file to use as the source image for the tracing.

3. Select the source image, and do one of the following:
   - To trace the image using a tracing preset, open the Tracing Presets menu in the Control panel, and select a preset (**Figure 2**).
   - To trace the image using the default tracing options, click Image Trace in the Control panel, or choose Object > Image Trace > Make.

   Note: If you are working with a large image, you may see a dialog box warning that tracing may proceed slowly, and asking if you would like to proceed. Click OK.

   Adobe Illustrator processes the image and displays a Progress dialog box if the processing time is lengthy. When complete, the Control panel displays advanced Image Tracing options.
4. (Optional) Use the Control panel to adjust the results of the tracing by selecting other image tracing presets.
5. To convert a tracing object to paths, click the Expand button in the Control panel (**Figure 3**).

   The tracing is converted to paths (**Figure 4**).

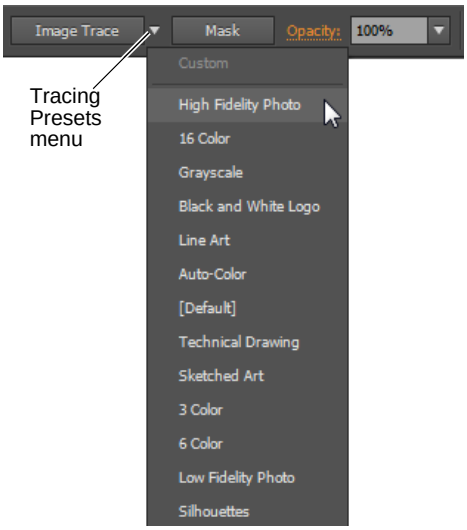

Figure 2 Image Trace button and Tracing Presets menu

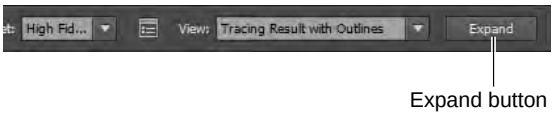

Figure 3 Image Tracing Control panel

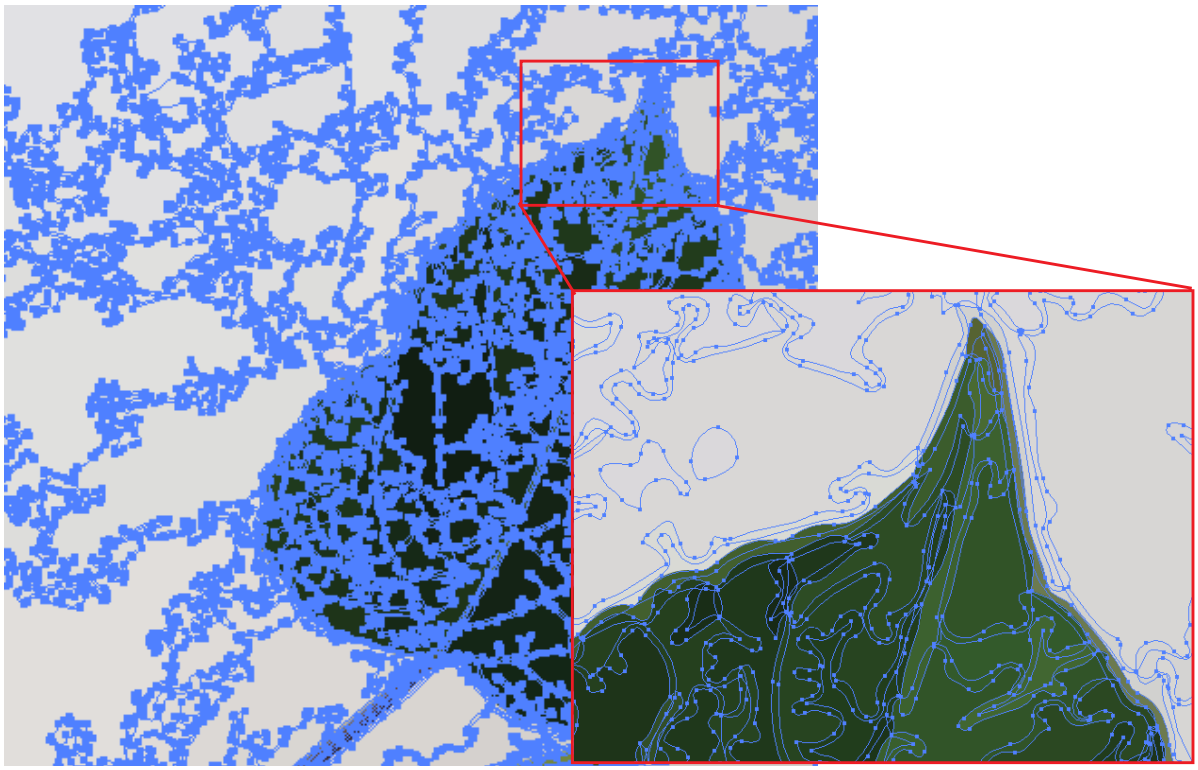

Figure 4 Image detail of a tracing that has been converted to paths

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