Student notes 023 – Tree foliage using a particle system

We looked at creating a tree trunk using the Skin modifier in module 022. Now we need to make some foliage. The best way to do this is to create a particle system of leaf objects (or, better, a group of leaf objects that can be randomly selected for each instance location) and then limit the location of those objects with weight painting. I’ve put a basic step by step guide at https://users.soe.ucsc.edu/~yonge/02_PDF_guides/023_ParticleSystemsFoliage.pdf

Youtube tutorials
There is an excellent series of six tutorials on making a forest in Blender at https://youtu.be/l8LkOMU8OMg. This goes from a basic cube all the way through to a complete forest model, though it’ll take you about four hours to see all the tutorials – and longer if you’re following along. But for those of you wanting to make realistic nature scenes, this is a must-see.

    There is another good – though advanced and memory intensive – tutorial on making trees with particle systems at https://youtu.be/8GKes2Fy0E.

Sapling
Though it doesn’t use particles, there is an add-on that comes with the trunk Blender release called Sapling. If you enable it, you’ll find it not under Add Mesh but under Add Curve – Add Tree. The fact that the Sapling add-on is built around a curve model has advantages and drawbacks. On the good side, it’s highly configurable. On the bad side, the resulting models just don’t look realistic in close up shots (though they’re ok in the distance). It’s an option.

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