

FINDING THE PERFECT LEAF

Pick a fresh leaf for your project. It can be kept fresh in a plastic bag with a spray of water until you are ready to use it. PLEASE NOTE: You will be painting on the back of the leaf.

Shape

1. The general shape of the leaf should be interesting. Less interesting shapes can be combined into groups. Contrasting shapes and sizes can make beautiful collage pieces.
2. Ruffled edges or bug holes can add a great design element to your piece.
3. You should be careful of sharp points on the leaf edges; when they become solid metal they can scratch or tear clothes.
4. The leaf should be firm. Weak, limp leaves do not hold their shape well.
5. Long, narrow leaves can roll or curl.
6. Keep the stem on the leaf to provide a handhold.

Texture

1. The vein structure gives you a beautiful texture. The veins should be pronounced.
2. Feel the veins to make sure that they are tactile, not just visual. Sometimes the leaf may look interesting but the clay will not pick up the texture if it is not defined. When you cannot feel the texture of the leaf, the clay will reflect that fact.
3. Leaves should not be too waxy or hairy, because they are difficult to coat with paste.
4. Thick, moisture-filled leaves may split during firing.
5. Pods make interesting pieces, and usually split open during firing, making a great place for setting a stone.

Color

1. The leaves can be beautiful in bright silver.
2. Accent the dark vein structure by purposely tarnishing a leaf with liver of sulfur.
3. Specific liver of sulfur solutions can create wonderful ranges of color from gold, to magenta, to blue, to purple and black, depending upon the length of time the leaf is exposed to the liver of sulfur solution.

Reinforcement

1. A single leaf should have a layer of Art Clay about 1mm thick to ensure a strong and durable piece. Grouping leaves into a collage, or adding clay as design elements can significantly increase the strength of a piece.
2. Going over the leaf edges with a burnisher strengthens it and gives it the look of finely finished jewelry.

Tip: Make several leaves at once and set them aside. Leaves make great natural accents on jewelry, pottery, or other designs.

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