



## Leaf Pendant

A Must Keep

Product Review

Projects

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It is best to use a fresh leaf, dry leaves can look very interesting but are often fragile and break easily when painted. You can keep the leaf wrapped in plastic with a few drops of water, until you are ready to use it, this will keep it fresh.

### What kind of a leaf can I use?

You can really use any leaf as a base, but some will work better than others. Here are some things worth thinking of:

Try to find a leaf with an interesting shape and good texture. Upturned edges, holes and missing pieces can look really interesting when turned into silver. Remember that your leaf will turn into metal, sharp points can make it very uncomfortable to wear against your skin, and they can get caught in clothes.

Choose a firm leaf. Flimsy, soft leaves won't keep their shape and will be harder to paint. If the leaf is very thin and long, it can curl up when you paint it. Remember you will be painting the back of the leaf. The vein structure gives you a beautiful texture. Hold the leaf and check the veins to make sure that they are tactile, not just visible. If you can't feel the texture of the leaf, the finished item won't have a visible vein structure.

Leaves shouldn't be too waxy or hairy, as these are difficult to coat with paste. Thick, moisture-filled leaves may split during firing.

### Painting

1. Use a 10gm pot of Art Clay 650 Paste. Add a

little water to make the paste thinner, this makes it easier to get started - the first couple of layers should be very thin. Add about 1 part water to 2 parts of paste.

2. Paint one layer of the paste on the back of the leaf. You can paint the stem, but it would be extremely fragile until fired. Paint carefully, ensuring that the paste is really covering the entire leaf.

3. Put on a steel mesh and dry with a hair dryer. Remember to hold the dryer over your leaf, not at an angle, or you'll be chasing your leaf as it flies across the room! You can also leave it in a warm spot, under a lamp for instance, and come back to it later. Be careful so you don't overheat it, or the leaf can bubble up, or warp.

4. Add another coat of paste, still thin, and dry again.

5. Paint your third layer; this can be thicker than the first two. Now you should dab the paint on, rather than painting it. Dry again. Remember that you are seeing the back of your final piece - don't worry if you can't see the vein structure.

6. Now keep painting/dabbing and drying each layer, until your leaf is about 1mm thick.

7. Add extra paste to the edges and centre vein, to reinforce these sensitive points.

8. Make sure the leaf is completely dry and then fire it. If you are very, very careful you can use abrasive paper, or a file, to smooth off the edges before firing, but remember that the thin layer of dried, un-fired clay is extremely fragile. Depending on your leaf and how steady your hands are, it might be better to do this after firing. If you want to use a gas hob top, follow the instructions you have been given for that.

9. Drill a hole with a pin-vice for attaching to a chain, ribbon or ear wires.

10. Finish with a stainless steel brush and polish as you like.

### Finishing

If you want to, you can colour the leaves with Liver of Sulphur. The colours you can get range from gold to green, blue, purple and black, depending on how long the leaf is exposed to the liver of sulphur solution, and the temperature of the solution. The darkness also accentuates the vein structure of the leaf. Liver of Sulphur will rub off after time, when worn. You can use beeswax or an acrylic clear spray to avoid this. Going over the edges with a burnisher strengthens the leaf and gives it a lovely shine.

Why not make several leaves in one go; it doesn't take much longer than doing one. After firing you can keep them aside for adding to jewellery at a later stage. Or why not combine several of them into one large pendant or bracelet? You just use Oil Paste to 'glue' them together, and then fire again.