

## LEAF CASTING

**Supplies:** Leaves, builder's sand, plastic gloves, PAM, saran wrap, a cardboard nursery tray (or similar) to build the project in, Portland cement, small containers to measure ingredients and a bucket to mix the mixture in. Don't use a SINK at all even for cleaning. It WILL clog your drain. {Note: fine dirt can be used for the mound then reused instead of sand. Clumpy dirt won't work.} The mixture is **one**-part Portland Cement to **three** parts builder's sand. Leaves with deep veins work best.

**Directions:** Add a layer of saran wrap to cover the bottom of a cardboard nursery tray - the type supplied by the nursery. Next place a mound of damp, not WET, sand bigger than the width and length of your leaf. Cover the mound with saran wrap, then place the leaf on top of the saran wrap with the leaf top facing down. The wrap must extend out from the edges of the leaf, as this keeps the concrete from coming into contact with the sand. Spraying PAM on the leaf back will help with removal of the leaf after the cement is dry. Center it on the mound in your tray.



Next take three parts of fine sand, one part of Portland cement, if using dry cement. Add water a small amount at a time. Continue to add water until the mix is the consistency of toothpaste. Place a little of the mix on top of the leaf, then begin working it into a smooth surface at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  " deep over the leaf. Keep this up until the leaf is covered evenly with the same depth of cement. Don't taper too much at the leaf's edges or it will be thin and break.

Cover the leaf loosely with a little plastic or a damp cloth if a warm day. You don't want it to dry too quickly. Keep it out of the sun. Depending on the size of the leaf you have used, it may only take a day to dry. PATIENCE IS CRUCIAL!

To unmold, gently lift the concrete leaf and all. Turn it over in your hand and gently peel back the leaf. Use a tool to chip off the leaf edges if they are not to your liking. If you want to increase the visibility of the veins, use a nail to deepen them after they are dry. Let dry for a few weeks. It can then be painted with either latex house paint diluted 1:1 with water or craft latex paint (love the type with glitter in it). Brush on one color and quickly wipe it off with the old cloth, add another color if you'd like. On the back of the leaf use a full-strength solution of the paint. The leaves fully cure in about thirty days. Do not place them outside exposed to the elements until then. You can paint or add glitter glue when they are dry. You should seal with a sealer meant for concrete if you plan to use it outside.