

Creative Concrete Leaves

Supplies needed and/or suggested:

- Menards Vinyl Cement Patch (Black, White and Red bag)
- Menards Professional Grade Concrete Sealer (Gray Bucket with Blue lid)
- Buckets to mix cement and store dirt & sand
- Sand or fine dirt for mounding the leaves into bird baths, etc.
- Various files and a scraper for sanding and cleaning the leaves
- Scrub brush to use with water to clean the leaves
- Paring knife for cleaning out veins
- Cheap duct tape to repair holes in leaves
- Several pairs of good rubber gloves
- A mask to cover nose and mouth when mixing cement
- Safety glasses to wear when filing and sanding leaves
- Smaller buckets to hold water for cement mixing
- Smaller bowls to prop leaves when sealing
- Lots of smooth, clean cardboard
- A table or work surface
- Michaels Acrylic and Metallic paints by Folk Art, Americana, Martha Stewart
- Michaels Various paintbrushes from very fine and small to about an inch wide

Directions for making leaves:

Leave a 2" stem on the cut leaf. Patch any holes by placing tape on the good side of the leaf because you will be putting cement on the backside where the veins are the most prominent. A small piece of another leaf can be placed on the back of the leaf to adhere to the tape so the tape will not stick to the cement. Place cardboard on the work surface and make sand or dirt mounds to fit the size and shape of your leaves. (When making stepping stones, just lay the leaves flat on a smooth surface.)

Get cement area ready on cardboard with a cement bag cut open, buckets filled with water, (one to add to the cement and one to clean off your gloved hands). Wearing your face mask and gloves you can begin to mix the cement a little at a time adding more cement and water as needed to reach the quantity you want and the consistency of peanut butter. Not too dry and not too soupy. Pat cement onto the back of leaves starting at the middle and pressing out to the edge, leaving approximately ¼" of the leaf showing. Follow the shape of the leaf for a more realistic edge. If there are folds in the leaf or it curves to one side, it will make for a more interesting leaf. Make sure to pat on enough cement thickness to cover the veins and then go thinner in thickness as you move to the edge. Remember this is a vinyl patch cement so additional repairs to fill in or fix problems is not an issue. Once you have the leaf covered, make a little bit of a stem, smooth the back as best you can and pat a flat, level spot on the back so the leaf will sit level when finished. Allow the leaf to dry at least a day for small ones, 2-5 days for larger ones. When the leaf has dried, turn the leaf over and peel the real leaf out. Use a paring knife to slice the vein to make it easier to remove, then use your fingers or a tool to remove all of the leaf veins from the cement. You can then scrub the leaf completely clean using water and a scrub brush or even a (not too strong pressure washer). After the leaves are dry, you are ready to clean them up using a scraper and various filing tools. Now it is time to paint your cement leaves. Have fun and be creative with the acrylic and metallic paints. Give the paints time to dry well before sealing your leaves. Three coats of sealer on the front and back should do the job. When coating the front, be sure to watch for dripping on the backside. Coat the side edges when doing the front of the leaves. Once the front is dry, turn the leaf over onto a small dish/bowl so you can coat the backside without it sticking to the cardboard. When that side is done, you are ready to enjoy the fruits of your labor!