

PROJECT: MAKING HOSTA-LEAF SCULPTURES WITH LITTLE AND LEWIS

Seattle-area sculptors George Little and David Lewis are well known for their beautiful concrete castings of large leaves like hostas, which they then paint in whimsical colors and use to accent the garden. Today, they demonstrate for Martha how they create their incredibly detailed hosta-leaf pieces.

George and David love working with concrete because it's an extremely malleable substance—it fills every line and pore of a mold to reproduce its details exactly. The molds for their leaf sculptures are the leaves themselves. The two sculptors began experimenting with grape leaves, then moved on to larger leaves. The largest leaf they currently produce is that of the *Gumnera*, which can grow up to six and one-half feet wide. Three to four people are needed to pull such a large concrete leaf off of its mold.

MAKING HOSTA-LEAF SCULPTURES

Powdered pigment	Bonding agent (a concrete-strengthening additive)
Plastic wrap	Inexpensive 2-inch paintbrush
Exterior latex paint	Paintbrush
	Soft cotton cloth

1. Choose a large, strong hosta leaf from your garden.
2. In a bucket, mix 3 parts fine sand, 1 part cement, and pigment as desired. Add a little bonding agent and enough water to make a paste. The mixture needs to be easily workable—like spreadable cream cheese—but not too wet or dry.
3. Make a heap of sand (do not pack down tightly) about 6 inches deep and 4 to 6 inches larger than the leaf all around.
4. Press the leaf gently into the sand, with the bottom side of the leaf facing upward. Push sand around the edges where needed and add a little more under the leaf where required. This supports the leaf under the layer of heavy concrete you'll apply.
5. Place strips of plastic wrap under the edges of the leaf to keep the sand away from the concrete.
6. With gloves on, spread the concrete mixture over the leaf to form a layer about 1/2 inch thick, following the contours and thinning to about 1/4 inch at the edges. Brush smooth with a damp 2-inch paintbrush.
7. Let set overnight, covered with plastic wrap.
8. The next day, pull the leaf off of the concrete and gently trim any rough edges by scraping them with an old screwdriver or knife.
9. To paint your leaf sculpture, mix 1 part exterior latex paint in a color of your choice with 2 parts water, and brush over the surface of the leaf. Wipe at once with a soft cotton cloth to remove enough paint to provide a good finish. The paint should be thicker in the veins to emphasize the texture of the leaf.
10. Allow to dry. You can paint the back with undiluted paint to finish.

1 batch of cement - makes approx. 3 medium leaves

**1 scoop cement (1 1/2 lbs)
3 scoops sand (6 lbs)
1 cup bonding adhesive
1 cup water**

Bev's cement – More costly, easier as you just add water.

LOWES IN SILVERDALE, HOME DEPOT IN PORTLAND

COMMERCIAL GRADE, QUICKRETE, VINYL CONCRETE PATCHER

YELLOW PAIL IN 20 OR 10 POUND