

Leaf Casting Instructions

Let's start out with the tools for casting your leaf.

- **Dust mask** for the concrete dust which is caustic.
- **Gloves** for mixing in because, you guessed it, concrete is caustic and will dry out you skin.
- **Goggles** to protect your eyes, and in my case, glasses. (*Concrete dust brushed off glasses scratches them bad.*)
- **Rubber gloves** for applying the concrete to the leaf.
- A **spray bottle** for dampening the sand.
- I use a **2-cup measuring cup** to help add sand to the mound – spray – add sand – spray, until I get the desired mound shape.



Find a space that will accommodate your leaf plus the sand you will use to hold it in its shape. I use a 6-foot table and can do several at once but any sturdy table will do.

Here is the hosta leaf I am using – Niagara Falls:



Mound the sand into the shape of the leaf, spraying with the water bottle as you go to make it firm (don't soak it down – just wet will work).



Take the leaf and gently press it into the sand mound to give it a little impression of the leaf.



If the leaf has a lot of waves and ripples add wadded up plastic bag or paper under the section to maintain the original shape of the leaf.

I used a paper cup folded over to help hold up the stem end.



Next, mix up your Portland Concrete and sand, equal parts. You can use Concrete Sand Topping Mix instead of mixing your own Portland and sand, but make sure it is Sand Topping Mix, which has no stone aggregates. The sand in the mix gives better impressions on the leaf with more detail. Make sure it is mixed thoroughly.

I mix in 5 gallon buckets.



Add a little water and mix; add more water and mix; until it gets to be about Play Dough consistency. You want to be able to work it with your hands but it can't be too wet as it will be harder to control.



Next, we start applying it to the leaf. Start at the stem end.



Take a small handful and press it on the middle of the leaf. You may have to hold the leaf a bit while you apply the first concrete.



Work your way down the center then spread to the edges.



Be careful when you get to the edge and go slow.



Keep applying concrete until the entire surface of the leaf is covered.



Wait 24 hours for it to set up, and then remove the leaf. Some leaves remove easy like my Sum of All, Sum and Substance and Sagae. The Niagara Falls I used for this leaf looked like this when I was done.



I used a sharp knife to help remove the leaf from the veins, but any small pointy thing will work. Just be careful, as the concrete still can be scarred and broken until it cures for 7-10 days.

I try to wait that long before painting. Any outdoor paint will work, but don't paint all of the back. Concrete cures for up to 30 years so it needs to breathe. Plus, I seal it with a concrete sealer.



Here is the Niagara Falls leaf unmolded the next day.



This leaf was a bit different than most. Most of the time the finished product looks like a bowl, but this ended up inverted because that was the way the original leaf looked.



This is what the sand mound looked like when I removed the finished leaf.



... and my green thumb!



Hope this helps.

Not real hard to do so get out there and look for those leaves.

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