

Collecting fall leaves is a great way for kids to get outside & examine different shapes and colors. I remember my mom preserving our most colorful finds by ironing them between sheets of waxed paper before hanging them in the windows or using them to decorate the Thanksgiving table. Here are a couple alternative methods that can involve the whole family!

SELECTING GOOD CANDIDATES

- Use fresh leaves (or small clusters of leaves) that are bright and fairly supple.
- Avoid leaves that are brittle, turning up at the ends, ripped, or spotted with rot.
- If you pick leaves directly from the tree, dry them out slightly by pressing them between sheets of copy paper or paper towels underneath a heavy book for a few days (any longer & they will begin to fade and turn brittle).

Decoupage

1. Coat one side of each leaf in decoupage (such as Mod Podge) using a foam brush.
2. Set them to dry on a piece of newspaper, parchment, or waxed paper.
3. Allow the decoupage to completely dry. It will turn clear and will no longer be sticky.
4. Repeat on the other side. When the second side is dry, the leaves are ready to use.
5. This method preserves the color and form of the leaves for an extended period of time.

Glycerin Bath

1. Mix up a glycerin solution. Combine 17oz (530 mL) of liquid, vegetable glycerin (available in craft stores, pharmacies, and online) to half a gallon (2 liters) of water.
2. Pour the solution into a flat pan. Place the leaves in the solution and cover them with a plate or lid to hold them down. Submerge 3-5 days.
3. Remove the leaves from the solution & allow to dry. The color will look brighter and the leaves should feel supple.
4. This method makes the colors more vibrant. Yellows become more intense, and reds and oranges become a vibrant ruddy color.