

Leaves can be used in crafts, prints

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The magnificent beauty of autumn can seem far away after the brilliant colors are replaced with bare branches and blankets of snow. You can easily save a snatch of the season, and its colorful memories, by preserving your favorite leaves and using them in crafts and prints.

Leaves can retain their colors for several years if a few precautions are taken. To avoid fast fading and drying, leaves should be kept flat and moist until you are ready to use them. This is easily done by laying them flat in a zip-lock plastic bag as they are collected during your nature walks. You can also take along a magazine and place your leaves between the pages. If you use a magazine, though, remember not to use one with glossy, slick pages and also remember to carry it flat.

When you return home, your collection can be used in several ways. A few examples are pressed leaves and dried arrangements, leaf prints and children's art projects.

PRESSED LEAVES: Spread specimens between sheets of newsprints, place several newspapers on top and then use several books to weight all down with heavy books. Change the newspapers every day for four or five days, until the leaves are dry enough to remain flat. Finally, place them one last time between fresh newspapers, top with books and let stand for several days. Your leaves are now pressed and are ready for mounting or other use.



Start out on a narrow, dirt road like this one and chances are good you will soon be on one of the many miles of "two-track" trails in the Grand Traverse Region. Autumn is a prime time to follow one of the colorful tours.

MOUNTED ARRANGEMENTS: Select those leaves desired for mounting and arrange them on a piece of stiff paper or thin cardboard. Try several different placements and groupings until you achieve the right mix of color, texture and design. Next, thin some white glue with water and apply to each leaf with a brush. Place your leaf onto its position on the mounting

paper, cover with a piece of waxed paper and gently press. When all leaves are arranged and glued, cover with a piece of plastic wrap, place several heavy books on top and allow to thoroughly dry for several days. Once dry, your arrangement can be displayed and enjoyed. The leaves should stay bright and fresh looking for several years.

LEAF PRINTS: Leaf prints can be created from several different techniques. Place your leaf on a piece of thin cardboard and secure in place. Stand the mount upright and spray a fine mist of oil paint or printers ink on it from a distance of approximately one foot. After the paint or ink has dried, remove the leaf and your print remains. To try a different technique, use a stamp pad or spread either ink or paint onto a piece of glass. Place your leaf, veiny side down, onto the glass or pad and carefully press down. Next, transfer the leaf, inked side down onto the paper. Remove the leaf, allow to dry and enjoy.

CHILDREN'S ART: Children can enjoy the fun of collecting and preserving leaves through a variety of arts and crafts projects. Once leaves are collected, for example, children can make their own leaf prints by placing a piece of white paper over a leaf and rubbing the side of a paperless crayon over the top, bringing out the veiny texture and outline. Original placemats can be created by mounting leaves on colored construction paper, adding drawings or pictures if desired, and covering on top and bottom with clear contact paper. Treasured window hangings can be made by placing leaves between two pieces of waxed paper and sealing with a hot iron, under parental supervision.

Irregardless of the method, collecting and preserving leaves can be a fall activity enjoyed by all ages and all members of the family.

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