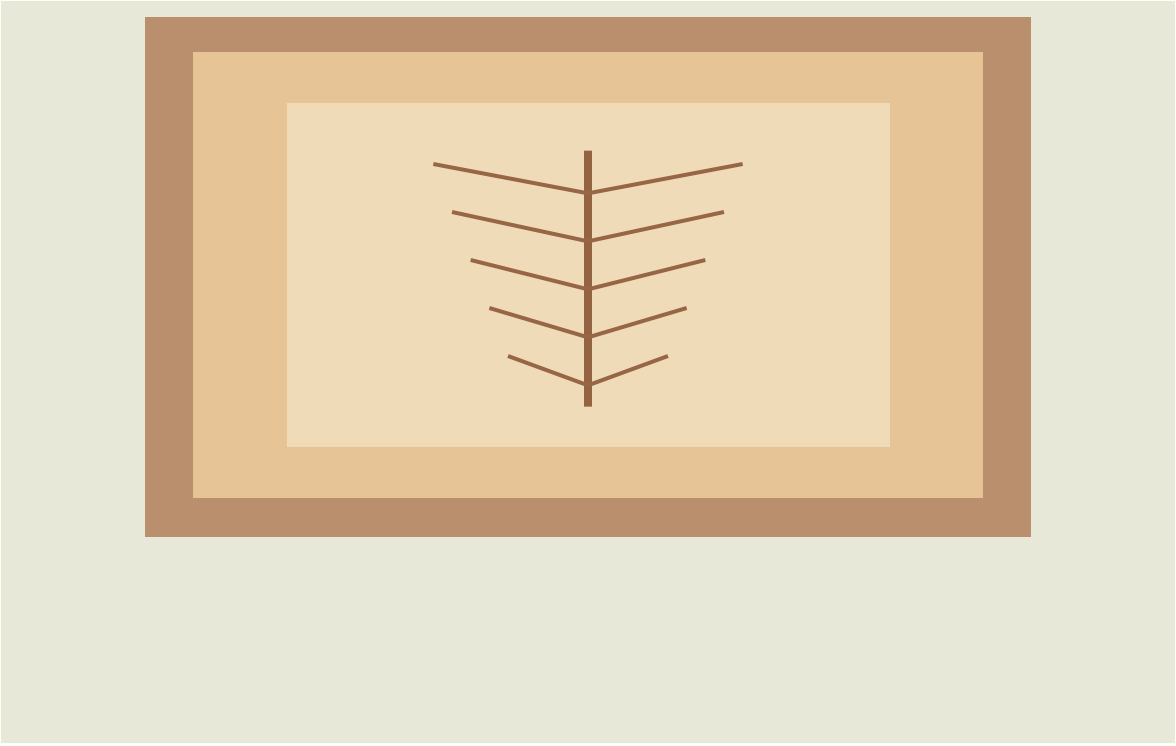
STEADLEAF PRESS

MAKE / FREE ORIGINAL GUIDE / STP-MAKE-F101

TEXTURE A CLAY DISH WITH LEAVES

Safe leaf selection, gentle imprint, patient drying



ONE CLAY DISH / ONE LEAF VEIN IMPRESSION

Original original pattern charts and observation sheets

No real leaf, clay forming, food-safety or material test.

Edition: Original Steadleaf Press FREE MAKE adult digital instructional guide. Independent practical, botanical-safety and editorial review verdict PASS. No real leaf or clay specimens, imprint trials, physical printing or food/material safety tests. No real leaf was collected or pressed, no clay was shaped or dried, and no material, allergy, mold, varnish, food-contact, thickness, strength or child/pet safety tests were performed by Steadleaf Press.

A leaf pattern made by removing the leaf

The texture in this project is the shallow imprint left by a real, safely handled leaf, not a plant permanently embedded in clay. Choose a single known, clean, healthy, non-irritating, untreated leaf with distinct, raised veins. Work with the underside, where veins may stand out more prominently, against a small soft air-dry-clay dish. Gently press once with a smooth blunt craft pad, then lift the leaf away completely while the clay remains workable. Keep all leaf fragments out of the final clay. Let the clay dry according to its actual manufacturer's instructions. The result is a dry indoor display dish, not tableware, a succulent planter saucer, a food dish, a soap tray or an outdoor leaf impression that can safely sit in rain.

Plant identification is a prerequisite, not an optional decoration step. Some leaves and saps are irritants, allergens, toxic on contact, contaminated with pesticides or harmful to pets. The UK Royal Horticultural Society advises checking plant identities and toxicity and keeping harmful trimmings away from animals; the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety also documents significant dermatitis risks from poison ivy, oak, sumac and other plants. Do not use a leaf you cannot confidently identify and handle safely. Avoid unknown roadside, wild, recently sprayed, pest-damaged, fuzzy, spiny, thorny, sap-exuding, sticky, mildewed or chemically treated leaves. The practice may be skipped if you lack a suitable plant: choose a commercially manufactured non-sharp leaf-texture stamp for a separate non-botanical alternative, and record that no real plant material was used. Do not mislabel that variant as a real-leaf imprint.

Original paper placement plan

Start with a low rounded oval one-piece blank. The *illustrative* outer shape is about 10 x 8 cm in top view, with a shallow interior about 8 x 6 cm, a broad floor planned around 8-10 mm thick (or thicker if the clay maker requires), and a rounded low rim rising about 1-1.5 cm. This is only a planning example and not a precise mould or measured final dimension. A manufacturer may require a thicker or smaller shape; its minimum and maximum thickness, water, molding and complete drying instructions override the numbers here. The approximate 1 cm plan-view band between the outer and inner oval is horizontal rim width, *not* material wall thickness.

Keep one compact leaf entirely within a central 5 x 3 cm imprint zone, leaving a broad unmarked buffer between its tips and the rim. The leaf should be smaller than the impression zone and reasonably flat, so you are not forced to fold its stem across the rim or press a pointed petiole deep into the clay. If the only leaf available is too large or too sharp, choose another suitable smaller leaf or abandon the real-leaf technique; do not cut a questionable wild leaf or break a hard stem off into the clay.

Working area | Example design target | What to check

Whole oval blank | 10 x 8 cm wet, maker-dependent | Rounded shape and supported base

Shallow central floor | About 8 x 6 cm | No thin membrane beneath imprint

Planned floor thickness | About 8-10 mm only if allowed | Maker minimum still met after pressing

Low rounded lip | About 1-1.5 cm gentle rise | No narrow 90-degree fold or sharp flange

Leaf imprint zone | Central 5 x 3 cm | Press on floor only, not over rim

Actual leaf | Smaller than zone, non-irritant and clean | Raised veins; no thorns, contaminants or sap

Final use | Flat, dry indoor display | No food, water, pot saucer, soap or candle

The word *dish* names the shape, not a food- or water-safe vessel. Crayola describes pressing ferns and other objects into thick air-dry clay to create imprints, and separately warns that even sealed Crayola air-dry clay is not waterproof. Dry indoor display is the appropriate boundary for this original lesson; coating, painting, fire safety and wet resistance would require separate material-specific instructions and tests.

Materials and plant-contact precautions

Prepare properly stored, still-soft manufacturer-labelled air-dry craft clay, an approved smooth protective craft board, a physical ruler, scrap paper, pencil, dedicated blunt rounded plastic shaping tool, small soft clean craft pad or smooth foam roller, and one identified, contact-safe, unblemished leaf or an optional manufactured leaf-vein tool if no eligible leaf is available. Use a clean craft-only tray for the detached leaf and a sealable bag for plant waste. Optional gloves must be chosen based on the actual plant and clay manufacturer’s directions; gloves do not make an unidentified or high-risk plant acceptable. Keep food-preparation utensils, drinking cups and kitchens separate from clay and foliage tools.

Check plant origin *before* bringing it to the worktable. A leaf should not carry soil, visible insects, surface treatments, suspicious powder, pollen clumps or irritating liquid sap. Gently clean or rinse it only if appropriate for the identified plant and local hygiene guidance, then let its outer surface become completely free of liquid droplets before pressing. Do not scrape or bruise the leaf, and do not use its pointed, hard or thick stem to gouge the clay. Check the underside for raised veins, and test the candidate briefly on separate clay without leaving it embedded. If you discover irritation, uncertainty, contamination or strange sticky residue, stop handling, follow relevant safety guidance and dispose of plant parts appropriately; do not simply wash unknown contact residue into the clay.

Do not work with a blade, piercing needle, powered roller, oven, kiln, microwave, strong heat gun, direct sun, fan blast or open flame. Do not dry-sand clay or brush dry dust into the air. Avoid breathing clay dust, wash hands, and damp-wipe residues as the maker recommends. Children, pets and food should be kept away from leaves, clay fragments and drying samples. Small foliage and clay scraps are not pet toys. No portion of the finished dish is suitable for direct plant-growing contact or water exposure.

Three carefully separated technique moves

Pattern A - form a low one-piece oval without weakening the middle

Draw an outer 10 x 8 cm and inner 8 x 6 cm oval on dry paper with a real ruler; mark a central 5 x 3 cm leaf-image zone. This is a direction and placement card, not a print-to-scale cutting template. Form a low thick soft oval from one maker-approved clay portion on an approved level surface. Using the pads of fingers or a blunt rounded tool, slowly make a broad shallow central floor, then gently raise a continuous rounded low rim from the same piece in several passes. Keep the centre thick and fully supported. Do not puncture the floor to measure thickness or glue a separate tall rim coil. If the proposed size would create a thin base, make a smaller dish or use more clay.

Pattern B - press the vein side without trapping plant material

On a separate little scrap of equally soft, sufficiently thick clay, place the identified, clean, surface-dry leaf underside / raised-vein side DOWN. Use a clean smooth soft craft pad to press lightly and evenly, without dragging sideways or crushing the stem. Lift the leaf by an intact edge or safe petiole with a gentle peel motion while the clay remains soft. Observe the trial: veins are readable / too faint / dangerously deep / leaf stuck. For the actual dish, lay an eligible leaf flat inside the inner 5 x 3 cm area, raised-vein side DOWN. Press once with controlled even light pressure, supporting the dish floor from below. Do not push the leaf or tool into a deep channel. If the pattern is too faint, accept the impression or try a new, maker-compatible soft specimen; repeated hard pressing can thin or break the floor. Remove every part of the leaf before drying.

Pattern C - inspect, label, fully dry and keep away from wet use

After the leaf has been removed, view the wet dish under normal light. Check for leaf fragments, visible plant residue, crushed rim, imprint penetrating too close to the base, sharp petiole holes and edge cracks. Remove only accessible loose detached fragments gently with a blunt tool; if the leaf is stuck or a contaminated bit cannot be removed without gouging the clay, discard the flawed sample rather than intentionally curing organic debris inside. Record the actual leaf identity (if known), source, contact check, orientation, one-press result, depth impression qualitatively, and whether the wet floor was still visibly sound. Dry the piece on a manufacturer-approved stable level support using the maker’s complete drying rules, with no heat or forced airflow. Inspect the fully dried *appearance* without bending, wetting, filling, testing load or tasting any material. Display on a dry protective surface only.

Step-by-step instructions

1. Read the clay and plant safety requirements

Confirm the craft material is manufacturer-labelled AIR-DRY clay rather than oven-bake or firing ceramic clay. Read its safety, minimum thickness, soft handling and complete drying instructions. Separately ensure you can identify and safely handle the proposed leaf; avoid irritating, allergenic, poisonous, sprayed, thorny and unknown plants. If uncertain, do not use that leaf.

2. Choose a small leaf or honestly record a substitute

Pick a clean, healthy, surface-dry, identified non-irritating leaf with visible veins and no hard pointed stem, smaller than a 5 x 3 cm placement area. If none is safely available, use a known-safe non-sharp manufactured leaf impression tool instead and mark the finished project as a tool-textured alternative, not a leaf-contact trial. Do not harvest a leaf from a protected or unfamiliar plant.

3. Set up a dedicated low craft workspace

Place a stable clay-compatible board, pencil, physical ruler, clean paper, blunt rounding tool, gentle press pad and separate leaf disposal tray on the table. Keep clay dust, foliage, scissors, food, children, animals, heat and open drinks away. Use craft-only equipment, not food utensils.

4. Draw outer, inner and leaf zones on dry paper

Sketch an example 10 x 8 cm outer oval, 8 x 6 cm shallow inner area, and 5 x 3 cm central leaf-imprint zone. Measure with a real ruler, not with the PDF scale. Leave a broad buffer from the leaf to the rim. Write down actual maker thickness guidance before shaping.

5. Prepare one still-soft clay portion

Take an appropriate amount of fresh, soft, single-brand air-dry clay and knead gently as the manufacturer’s instructions direct. Cover unused material. Stop if the clay is bone-dry, dusty, crumbly, over-wet or inconsistent with its maker’s normal working state; do not try to restore it by soaking or harsh heat.

6. Shape a thick rounded oval blank

Pat one soft piece into a squat, smoothly rounded oval on the protective board. Use the paper plan only as a size reference, not as a mould. Aim for a gently even, maker-compatible thickness; do not roll out a large wafer-thin slab. If the material is insufficient, make a smaller piece rather than stretching the clay.

7. Depress a shallow centre and raise a low rim

With soft fingertips or a blunt tool, press the centre gradually and lift the outside edge in several low, supported passes. Keep the continuous base thick and the base-to-rim junction rounded, with no sharp right-angle hinge. The example 8-10 mm floor and 1-1.5 cm rim rise are targets only when the manufacturer permits them.

8. Make a safe imprint trial on spare clay

Take a separate small clay scrap of maker-compliant thickness. Lay the leaf underside (vein side) DOWN on it, using light even pressure from the smooth pad. Lift gently while soft, checking whether the veins transfer cleanly without breaking the scrap. If the leaf leaves sap, becomes stuck, tears or makes a deep hole, reject that material/method rather than proceeding.

9. Place the leaf within the centre of the actual dish

On the supported main soft dish, position the clean surface-dry eligible leaf entirely inside the central 5 x 3 cm zone, with the raised-vein side facing DOWN. Keep the leaf away from the rim and do not bury its thick petiole in the clay. The dish must rest fully on a supportive board before any pressure is applied.

10. Impress the veins once with light even pressure

Apply a smooth soft press pad gently across the leaf, ideally with one controlled press. Do not use an edged roller, sharp probe, fingernails or excessive force. Lift the pad, then remove the entire leaf carefully before the clay starts drying, peeling from an intact edge without dragging the leaf across the fresh impression.

11. Inspect the wet imprint and remove plant residue

Look for a readable vein pattern, even floor, undistorted rim, surface splits, contamination, leaf fragments or deep stem grooves. Use a blunt tool to lift only loose fragments if possible without further gouging. If you cannot remove material cleanly or the floor has become thin, mark the trial unsuccessful and rework/replace clay as permitted by its maker. Never intentionally bake or dry an organic leaf into the dish.

12. Set the dish for manufacturer-directed full drying

Leave the one-piece dish on its compatible supported surface in ordinary sheltered room conditions. Follow actual product-specific guidance on safe turning and ventilation. No direct sun, oven, heater, fan blast, forced bending or rigid mould. Record when drying began; *touch-dry* must not be mistaken for *fully dry*.

13. Check only the completely dry appearance

When full manufacturer drying is reasonably confirmed, inspect from above for legible veins, cracks, curling, loose botanical material and distortion, without scratch or load tests. View the underside only if movement is safe and maker-compatible. If uncertain that the clay is completely dry, record PENDING and continue drying without forcing an inspection.

14. Complete both maker records and store dry

Document plant identity/source, plant-contact checks, actual approximate dish size, imprint quality, pressing pressure category (light/too deep), whether all leaf material was removed, drying conditions and visual flaws. Dispose of leaf fragments and solid clay scraps safely, damp-clean dust, and wash hands. Place the fully dry dish only on a protected indoor shelf or tray beyond children/pets, and never use for food, water, a plant saucer, soap, burning material or heavy items.

Fix, care and preserve

The leaf veins are too faint

Do not immediately press harder into the same thin surface. Try a clearly veined, clean known-safe leaf and a fresh maker-compatible clay scrap first. Keep the leaf underside facing clay and the press pad level. A faint decorative mark is safer than a deep puncture.

The petiole punches a little hole

A rigid stem may be thicker than the veins. Exclude leaves with hard stems or position the safe, flexible part only, without cutting unknown plants or introducing sap. If the clay floor is thin or torn, set that specimen aside and begin a new thick one-piece practice dish.

The leaf tears, sticks, transfers dye or releases sap

Stop. Never leave botanical fragments inside the clay to dry or rot. If you cannot safely remove all visible fragments and contamination without damaging the surface, reject the sample. Use a differently identified, untreated leaf next time, or record a non-botanical stamp variant. No cleaning technique guarantees chemical/allergen removal from unknown sap.

The dish cracks or its rim warps during drying

Uneven clay thickness, direct airflow, unstable support and material formula may contribute. Follow the maker’s guidance about safe turning or supported drying stages. Do not bake, heat-blast, clamp against a deep bowl or claim guaranteed crack prevention.

A dried imprint is flat or less visible than the wet impression

Air-dry clay can shrink and surface definition can change. Record the visual outcome without re-cutting dry clay or scraping powder into the air. This digital exercise provides no tested depth-setting or dimensional predictions.

You want to coat, paint or use the dish to hold water

Painting/coating is outside this lesson. Fully dry air-dry clay may still absorb moisture; Crayola states that even sealed pieces of its clay remain non-waterproof, and recommends indoor

display. Do not label this dish as safe foodware, a plant saucer, an incense tray or an exterior garden object.

Foliage, clay dust and small pieces after work

Clean tools and skin according to the clay and identified plant guidance. Never sand or blow dry clay dust; use maker-approved damp wipes. Keep discarded leaves and small clay parts out of reach of pets and children and away from food.

Pattern 1 - Original leaf placement and safe contact map

Top-view paper plan: outer oval about 10 x 8 cm, shallow floor inside around 8 x 6 cm, central eligible-leaf placement 5 x 3 cm. Keep a distinct buffer between leaf edge and low rim. Mark the leaf UNDER side raised veins DOWN, with no rigid pointed stem pressed. Side-profile sketch: broad maker-safe floor about 8-10 mm planned, low rounded lip about 1-1.5 cm rise only when this brand permits. The print is a schematic, not a calibrated full-scale mould, so measure any real design with a physical ruler. Manufacturer minimum thickness always takes precedence.

Pattern 2 - Contact to imprint to full drying

Original sequence: identify a non-irritating known leaf and check it clean/surface dry -> maker-soft clay one-piece dish -> separate blunt practice imprint -> raised leaf veins downward inside central zone -> one gentle even press -> REMOVE ENTIRE LEAF WHILE SOFT -> inspect contamination and floor thickness -> supported manufacturer-complete dry -> visual crack and texture observation -> dry indoor display. If no safe real leaf, substitute a purpose-made non-sharp leaf stamp and label that alternative honestly. No intentional organic inclusion, no resin/paint/waterproofing, no food use.

Record 1 - Leaf selection and impression conditions

Field | Before pressing / example | Observed / recorded

Clay brand/formula and safety notes | Maker label governs | _____

Leaf identity and source | Known non-irritating, untreated | _____

Leaf surface contact check | Clean, no sap/spray/spines | pass [ ] reject [ ]

Real leaf vs manufactured stamp | Choose one and mark honestly | leaf [ ] stamp [ ]

Outer oval width/height | ~10 x 8 cm example | _____ x _____ cm

Floor/rim thickness | Maker-compliant; 8-10mm if allowed | Estimated ____ mm

Central imprint zone | 5 x 3 cm example | _____ x _____ cm

Trial scrap impression | Shallow, no stuck leaf | clear [ ] faint [ ] too deep [ ]

Main wet impression | One gentle press | clear [ ] faint [ ] too deep [ ]

All leaf material removed? | Yes before drying | yes [ ] no [ ] N/A [ ]

Wet cracks, damage or residue | Inspect only | _____

Additional maker thickness restrictions: _____

Handling warnings / product batch / plant-source proof: _____

Record 2 - Complete drying and indoor display checklist

[ ] Clay maker safety, permitted handling and drying instructions read.

[ ] Leaf confidently identified, contact-safe, untreated and surface dry OR stamp variant declared.

[ ] No unknown wild, irritating, thorny, pesticide-treated or sap-releasing leaf.

[ ] Paper plan measured by real ruler; no reliance on PDF printer size.

[ ] Broad floor and gentle rounded one-piece low rim maintained.

[ ] Trial scrap imprinted first; no deep gouges or punctured clay.

[ ] Leaf raised-vein side down and entirely inside central zone.

[ ] Whole actual leaf carefully removed while clay soft.

[ ] No leaf fragments left intentionally to dry inside the dish.

[ ] Same maker-directed stable support and complete drying observed.

[ ] Final veins/cracks/warp inspected without a strength test or PENDING marked.

[ ] No water, food, pot saucer, soap, candle, incense or load placed in dish.

[ ] Plant refuse, clay scraps and dust cleaned with maker/plant-safe methods.

[ ] Stored dry, indoors, away from children and pets.

Plant / stamp selection outcome: _____

Drying started: _____ Fully dry confirmed or PENDING: _____

Imprint legibility after dry: clear [ ] faint [ ] damaged [ ] pending [ ]

Cracks, warping or fragments after drying: _____

One safer or clearer next-trial adjustment: _____

Sources, originality and accurate claims

This original Steadleaf Press adult lesson combines a one-piece shallow air-dry-clay dish, a deliberately bounded leaf-vein impression zone, a real-leaf contact checklist, explicit complete plant removal before drying, and two printable maker record sheets. Plain craft concepts are broadly established. The following sources inform factual safety and material guidance only; their photos, diagrams and instructional wording were not copied:

- Crayola, *Air Dry Clay Imprints*:
https://www.crayola.com/en-ca/crafts/air-dry-clay-imprints-craft

- Crayola, *Can Air-Dry Clay pieces be sealed?*:
https://www.crayola.com/faqs/can-air-dry-clay-pieces-be-sealed-faq

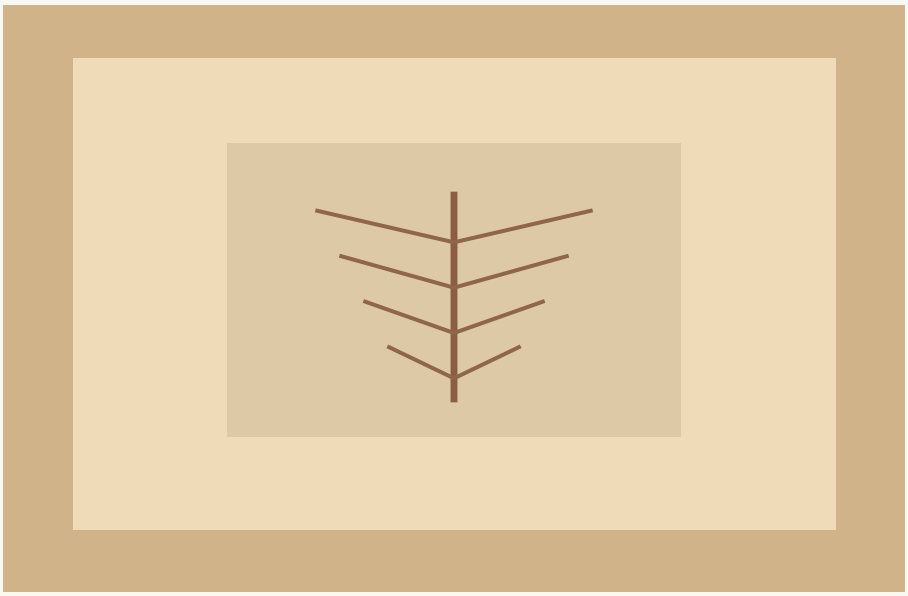
- Royal Horticultural Society, *Potentially harmful garden plants*:
https://www.rhs.org.uk/prevention-protection/potentially-harmful-garden-plants

- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, *Landscaping - Poisonous Plants*:
https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/landscaping/poisonous_plants.html

Testing boundary: This is original DIGITAL adult educational content. No real leaf was handled or identified, no clay was rolled or imprinted, no manufacturer material physically checked, no finished dish dried, cracked or observed, and no physical food, water, skin/allergen, flame, plant toxicity, imprint depth, washable durability, printed scale, or child/pet safety test was performed. No claim of certified food-safe or waterproof tableware.

Central leaf placement, no plant left embedded

Use a real ruler; the illustration is not a full-scale mold.



Outer oval roughly 10 x 8cm; floor roughly 8 x 6cm.

Central leaf zone 5 x 3cm; keep away from the rim.

Raised underside veins DOWN. Press once and peel away.

Maker minimum thickness ALWAYS overrides example numbers.

NO leaf fragment remains when drying begins.

Contact to drying: safe practice sequence

1. Identify a suitable leaf; NO unknown toxic/sap plant

2. Inspect leaf; clean, untreated and droplet-free

3. Test a light imprint on separate clay scrap

4. Place leaf raised-vein side DOWN within centre

5. Press gently, then REMOVE ENTIRE LEAF while soft

6. Dry under exact maker directions, display dry indoors

No safe real leaf? Record a commercial stamp as a variant.

Real-leaf contact and wet-clay observations

Clay manufacturer/batch:

Plant identity and origin:

Plant-contact safety checked? yes [ ] reject [ ]

Real leaf [ ] or safe manufactured stamp [ ]

Approximate wet outside and inner size:

Dry leaf? free of sap, pesticide, dirt?

Spare scrap impression: clear [ ] faint [ ] deep [ ]

Main impression: clear [ ] faint [ ] too deep [ ]

All real leaf material REMOVED? yes [ ] no [ ]

Any wet rim cracks or sticky botanical residue:

Estimated floor thickness / maker minimum: _____

Full drying and indoor display checklist

- [ ] Clay label, safe thickness, drying fully read
- [ ] Plant identified; no poison/irritant/untreated doubt
- [ ] No sap, visible residue, hard stem or loose bits
- [ ] Real-ruler guide used; not PDF 1:1 assumption
- [ ] One-piece floor and soft rounded low lip formed
- [ ] A spare practice imprint made in suitable clay
- [ ] Main impression shallow, within central zone
- [ ] WHOLE leaf removed BEFORE clay drying
- [ ] No leaf fragments deliberately embedded
- [ ] Full manufacturer dry followed or PENDING marked
- [ ] No food, water, pot saucer, candle or outdoor use
- [ ] Safe plant disposal, damp clay dust cleanup

No real material safety, waterproofing or durability trial.