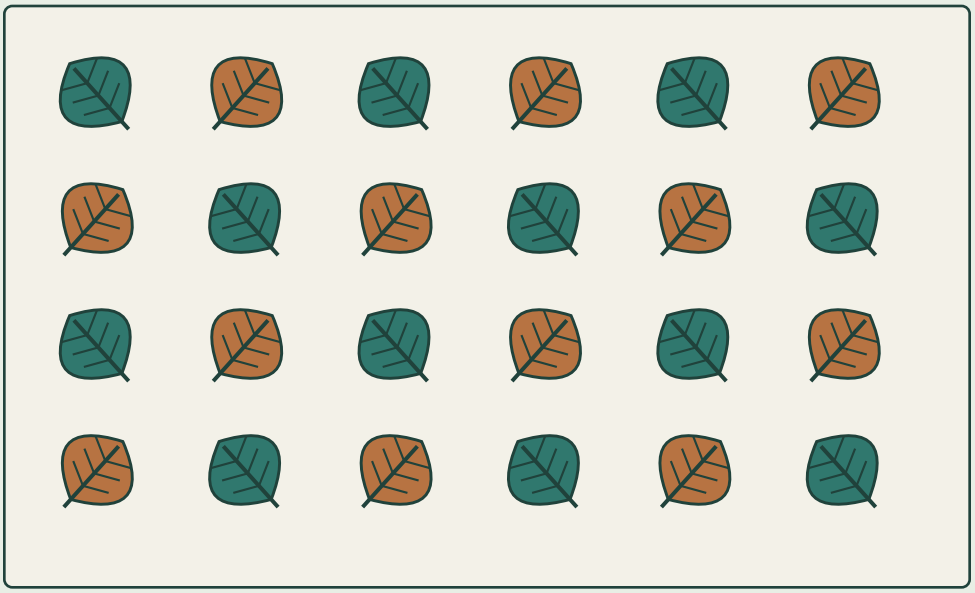
STEADLEAF PRESS

MAKE / BOTANICAL & NATURAL-MATERIAL CRAFTS

Create a Leaf-Print Paper Gift Wrap



24 IMPRESSIONS / TWO ALTERNATING MOTIFS

14 practical steps · Plan · ink · print

Original diagrams and two printable maker records

Illustrative plans — not physical test results

FREE GUIDE + PRINTABLES | STP-MAKE-F123

Before you start

A sheet of plain paper becomes a personal wrapping paper when a leaf impression repeats across it. Instead of covering the whole surface in paint, this project leaves breathing room between alternating motifs. Use two familiar clean pliable leaves with visible veins and paint labelled for paper craft. The sheet is for wrapping ordinary dry non-food gifts; it is not food packaging, a colourfast textile or a waterproof coating.

Materials: a plain 300 by 420 mm sheet of wrapping or kraft paper, matching offcuts, two known suitable pliable leaves (plus spares), water-based craft paint in two contrasting colours, two separate soft brushes or sponges, non-food palettes, scrap transfer paper, pencil, ruler, clean work board and drying space. Follow paint ventilation, handling and drying directions. Protect the table; keep plant matter, paint and wet prints away from children, pets and food. Do not use unknown, irritating or contaminated leaves.

Plan the project

Use a landscape sheet 420 mm wide by 300 mm high. The sample repeat uses six columns and four rows with centres spaced 65 mm horizontally and vertically. In row 1, centres are x = 40, 105, 170, 235, 300, 365 mm from the left and y = 45 mm from the top; rows 2, 3 and 4 use y = 110, 175 and 240 mm. Alternate motifs A and B across the grid, reversing the starting motif every row. That gives 24 impressions, 12 of each type. Select leaves whose actual printing footprints fit within roughly 45 by 50 mm, including the stem. The smallest nominal horizontal edge allowance is 17.5 mm; actual shape and angle govern.

Make a print trial on the same paper. Apply an even thin film of suitable paint on the raised-vein underside, then transfer once without sliding. Use a fresh sheet of scrap paper over the leaf to spread gentle pressure. Lift the leaf by its stem while supporting the paper. Compare a light and a fuller film rather than prescribing a universal paint amount. Do not dilute paint unless its label supports it. Let each colour dry as directed before overlapping, turning, folding or wrapping.

Steps 01–02

1. Choose the gift and measure its wrapping paper

Measure the actual gift with a dry scrap or plain sheet, including overlap and folds. The 420 by 300 mm example is a small sheet, not a universal box-size formula. If more paper is needed, enlarge the grid using the same centre spacing or choose a larger sheet. Keep the printed face away from the gift surface until dry.

2. Obtain two familiar printing leaves

Select sound leaves from a permitted local source or use lawfully acquired garden material. Parks Canada prohibits collecting natural objects in its protected places. Choose clean pliable leaves with stems and visible veins; avoid wet, brittle, toxic, irritating, mouldy or pest-bearing leaves. Use two different outlines or one type in two orientations. Do not strip a plant for a decorative print.

Steps 03–04

3. Prepare the sheet and trial offcuts

Lay the paper on a clean protected table, printing side up. Flatten gently without wetting or ironing it. Keep several offcuts of the same paper beside the sheet so paint behaviour can be compared. Mark the upper-left reference on the back or in a trimmed margin. Ensure the full sheet can rest undisturbed while drying.

4. Map the repeat on a separate sketch

Draw the 420 by 300 mm landscape rectangle and the six by four grid of centre positions shown in Pattern 1. Label the alternating motifs A and B. Row 1 starts A, row 2 starts B, and so on. Use the actual leaf silhouette to check the footprint around each centre. If it extends into another cell or beyond the paper, widen spacing or use smaller leaves.

Steps 05–06

5. Set up the two paint stations

Read the actual label and select paint explicitly suitable for printing on paper, including cleanup and drying requirements. Put small amounts on dedicated non-food palettes and keep separate brushes for A and B. Do not use solvent, spray paint or an improvised additive. A water-based label does not make paint edible or safe for every skin contact. Follow the label and wash hands afterwards.

6. Compare two trial impressions

Place leaf A underside up on scrap. Apply a thin even coat with the brush, following product directions, and remove obvious pools. Lift it by its stem, set painted side down on a trial offcut and cover with fresh scrap paper. Press gently over blade and veins without lateral motion. Lift by the stem and observe. Repeat with a slightly different film thickness if supported by the paint.

Steps 07–08

7. Choose the working impression

Compare the dry trial impressions for distinct edges and visible veins. A faint print may need more even paint coverage or contact; a blurred print may have excess paint or motion. Record the better method, paper type and drying instruction. Try leaf B separately because its surface may behave differently. Replace a torn or limp leaf rather than making it a permanent stamp.

8. Transfer discreet centre references

Use a ruler to mark small pencil dots near the planned impression centres on the actual paper, or make a removable guide strip along the edge. Place the leaf centre consistently relative to the dot. Use light marks that will not show prominently or be rubbed across a wet print. Confirm all four rows and six columns fit the intended sheet.

Steps 09–10

9. Print the first row in alternating colours

Make the first impression A at (40,45) mm, then B at (105,45) and continue A/B to x = 365 mm. Work in one direction so hands and sleeves do not cross wet paint. Use clean transfer scrap for every impression. Reapply a thin coat before each print as needed, not by flooding the leaf. Keep the footprint inside its allotted cell.

10. Repeat the remaining three rows

Start row 2 with B, row 3 with A and row 4 with B. Use the centre positions y = 110, 175 and 240 mm. Work around the dry portions of the sheet or let a row dry before reaching across it. Rotate the leaf only according to the recorded layout. A slightly uneven impression can be intentional; do not repaint a wet motif to force perfection.

Steps 11–12

11. Review missed prints without doubling them

Compare the 24 positions with the sketch; note omissions and smudges. If a missed position is empty and surrounding paint is dry, add the correct motif once. Do not overprint a blurred wet leaf image, which usually creates a doubled edge. A blank position or a deliberate irregularity is acceptable if the design reads well; remake only if necessary.

12. Allow the paper to dry flat

Follow the product’s stated conditions and time for drying. Leave the sheet on a flat protected support with airflow, away from direct heat, sunlight and food. Do not stack damp impressions or force the paper flat under a valuable book. If tackiness or transfer remains after the stated period, consult the maker and hold the sheet. Use a trial offcut to check ordinary folding behaviour once dry.

Steps 13–14

13. Wrap a dry non-food gift

When the paint is dry and the offcut indicates suitable handling, wrap the gift with the printed face outward. Do not place paint or plant residue directly against food, fabric requiring colour protection or sensitive surfaces. Avoid folding through a very thick print if it cracks or transfers. Use compatible paper tape on the reverse and keep the decorative sheet away from moisture.

14. Document and clean up

Record actual leaf types, paint products, row count, successful trial method, drying status and any transfer or crease issue. Follow the paint maker’s disposal and washing instructions; do not release painted plant material into nature or compost without checking local rules. Store the remaining dry paper flat or loosely rolled. No permanence, food-contact or rub-resistance certification is implied.

Fix, care and preserve

Veins are faint. Try a thin more even coat on scrap; choose a leaf with clearer raised veins.

Outline is doubled. Place and lift once without sliding. Do not print over the wet mark.

Paper wrinkles. Use less compatible paint or stronger paper, verified on an offcut.

Leaf tears. Replace it with a sound permitted specimen; do not use loose fragments.

Paint transfers after drying. Hold the sheet and consult the product directions; choose another method.

Source & evidence boundary

Original Steadleaf English prose, calculations, vector artwork, diagrams and maker records. The following sources provide factual context, not certification of this design. Follow actual component instructions and local collection, disposal and plant-movement rules.

Parks Canada, Visitor guidelines
https://parks.canada.ca/voyage-travel/regles-rules

Penn State Extension, Growing Gardeners: Leaf Printing
https://extension.psu.edu/growing-gardeners-leaf-printing

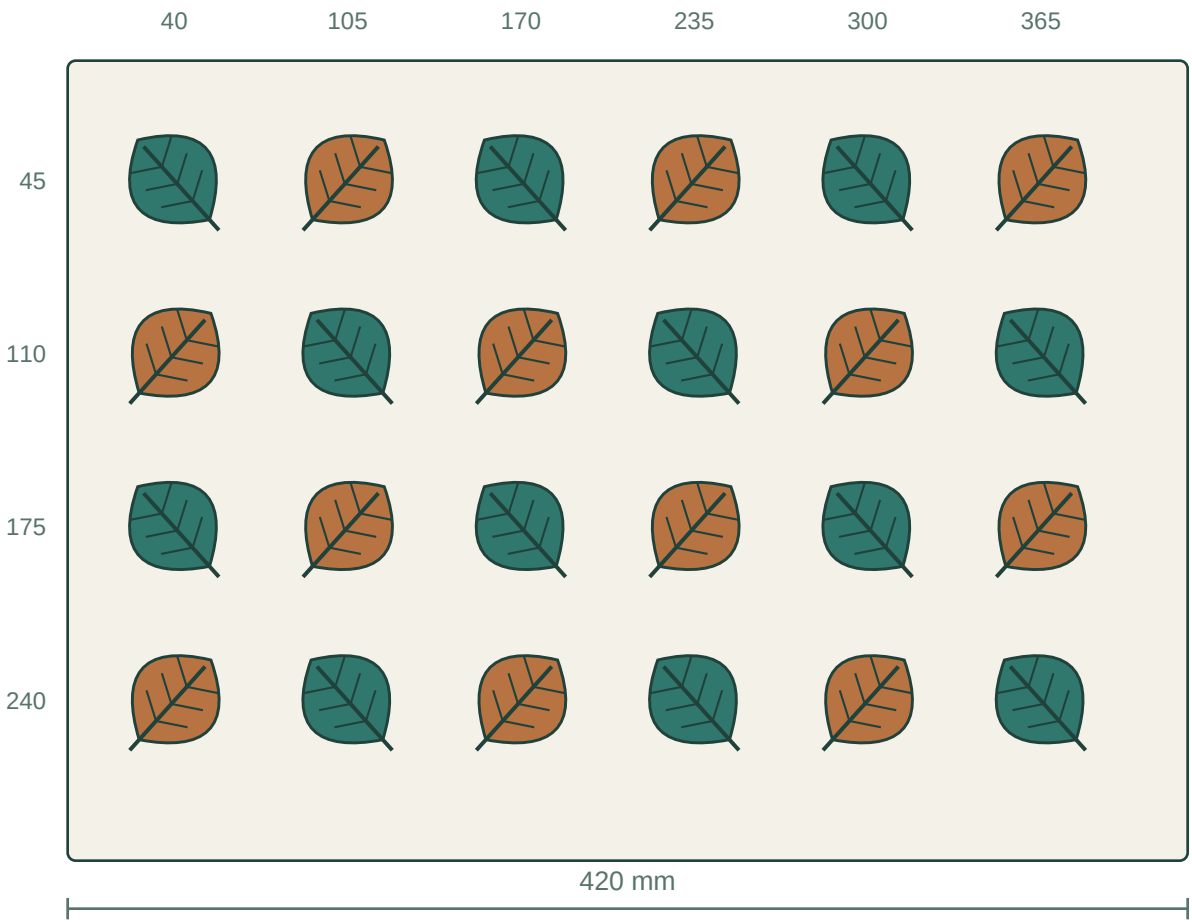
Canadian Conservation Institute, Caring for paper objects
https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/preventive-conservation/guidelines-collections/paper-objects.html

No third-party illustration, pattern or protected instructional passage is reproduced. The publisher has not physically made, collected, dried, measured, assembled, printed, fitted or tested the illustrated projects. Dimensions are planning examples, and the worksheets record reader observations only. Adult decorative craft; no safety, preservation, stability or pest-free certification is implied.

Six-by-four repeat grid

Illustrative 420 x 300 mm sheet with 24 alternating A/B centres, 65 mm pitch in each direction. x centres 40 to 365 mm; y centres 45 to 240 mm.

A / ALTERNATING REPEAT



6 columns x 4 rows = 24 impressions (12 A + 12 B)

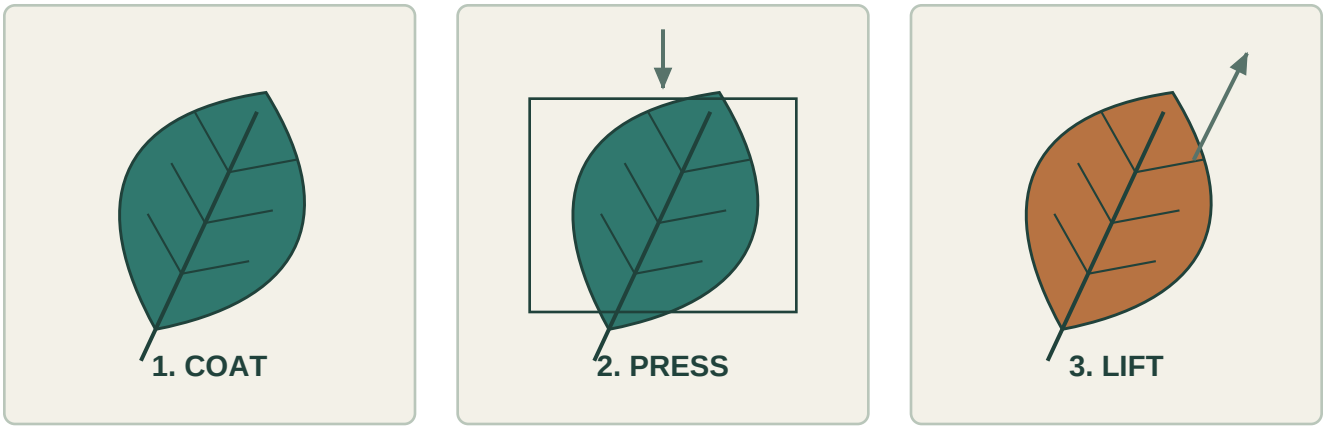
65 mm pitch; centre positions from upper-left corner.

Actual leaf footprints must fit the available cells.

Leaf impression and scrap comparison

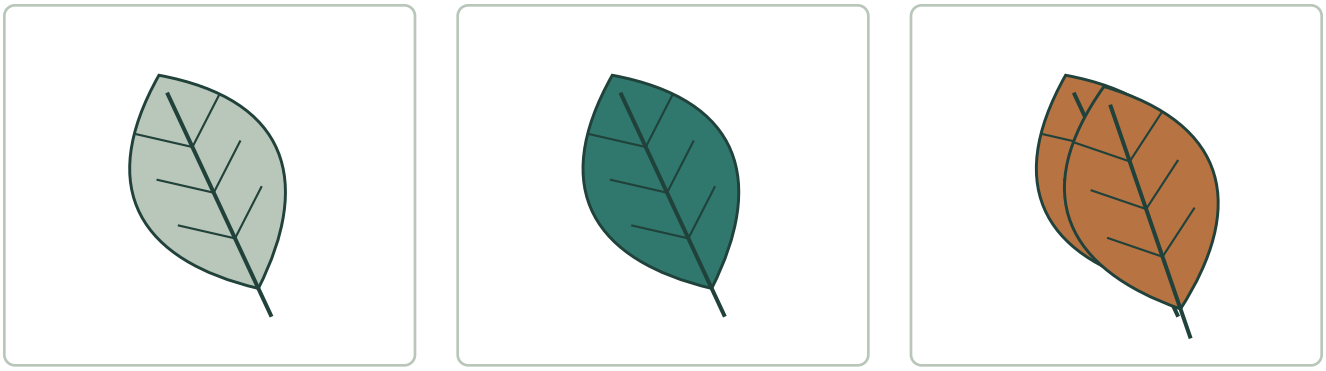
Thin paint on raised-vein underside; place painted face down, cover with clean scrap, press and lift. Compare light, clear and blurred impressions on actual scrap.

A / TRANSFER WITHOUT SLIDING



Thin coat on underside · clean scrap over leaf · lift by stem

B / COMPARE ACTUAL SCRAP IMPRESSIONS



LIGHT **CLEAR** **BLURRED**

Paper and print trial

Enter actual observations only. Mark missing information UNKNOWN or NOT CHECKED. This is a craft record, not a safety or preservation certificate.

Gift dimensions / actual sheet size

Leaf A and B / permitted source

Paint A and B / product directions

Motif footprint / horizontal and vertical pitch

Trial A coverage and observation

Trial B coverage and observation

Selected method / drying requirements

Decision: PROCEED / CHANGE / HOLD

Final repeat and wrapping

Enter actual observations only. Mark missing information UNKNOWN or NOT CHECKED. This is a craft record, not a safety or preservation certificate.

Actual row and column counts / A and B totals

Missing or intentionally varied impressions

Drying conditions and date

Scrap folding / transfer observation

Paper condition / fold location

Disposition: READY / CHANGE-REMAKE / HOLD

Non-food wrapping / care / cleanup

Date / notes