

Golden leaves pendant

Create unusual 'prongs' to set a cabochon in this leaf-themed metal clay pendant. **By Julia Rai**

Julia runs the Metal Clay Academy and teaches a variety of metal clay classes around the UK. She holds the prestigious Metal Clay Masters Registry credential at level four.

Prongs needn't be boring! You just need something that holds the cabochon securely. This project features cut leaf shapes to create prong-like elements to hold your cabochon in place. Using PME plastic cutters (which also emboss a design on the surface of the clay), makes embellishment a breeze for metal-clay artists. Alcohol ink adds a golden finishing touch.

MATERIALS

- 20g of silver metal clay
- Thick silver clay paste
- Silver clay syringe
- Cork clay
- Cabochon
- Sterling silver torque
- Roller
- Leaf skeleton
- Fine pin tool
- Small needle files
- Snake roller
- Sanding pads/sticks/papers
- Tweezers
- PME plastic ivy leaf cutters
- Nesting circle cutters - small brass tube works well
- Liver of Sulphur (optional)
- StazOn® metallic gold alcohol ink
- Tumble polisher or brass/steel brush
- Burnisher

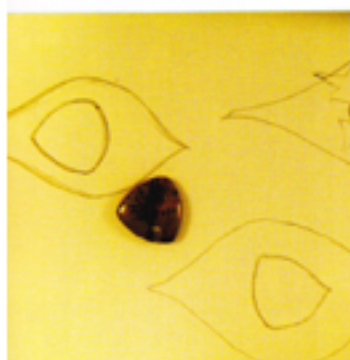
Designer tips

- Enlarge your basic design by the percentage, which corresponds to the type of clay you are using - 15% for Art Clay 650, PMC+ and PMC3. Fire these clays at 900°C for two hours for maximum strength.
- Sugarcraft suppliers have some brilliant cutters. They cut the leaf shapes and stamp the leaf veins too. Check the size carefully before buying them.
- Round balls (in a variety of sizes), flat discs or donuts are great to keep in your tool kit for embellishment. Make a batch, allow them to dry and you'll always have something to embellish your work with.

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INTERMEDIATE PROJECT



STEP 1
Using the cabochon as a starting point, design your pendant. Draw around the cabochon, and then experiment with the overall shape. For this freeform design, make sure you allow enough space around the edges of the cabochon to attach the prong elements. Once you've decided on the design, draw it the right size on paper, and then enlarge it by 15-20% on a photocopier to form a template.

STEP 2
Cut out the template and cut a hole just inside the line around the cabochon. This allows the back of the cabochon to be seen and saves on materials. Roll out the clay (the thickness of four playing cards) and texture it with the leaf skeleton. Using the template, carefully cut the shape out using a knife or pin tool. Cut out the hole behind the cabochon. Place the pendant somewhere warm to dry.

STEP 3
To position the leaf elements correctly so they act as prongs to hold the cabochon, a cork clay plug is needed. This should be roughly the same dimensions as the enlarged template cabochon line. As cork clay is dense and requires at least 24 hours to dry, make this well in advance. Form it to the template size and shape and make it about twice as thick as the cabochon.

STEP 4
The cork clay plug does not need to be a precise size for this design. It is used to hold the prong elements at the right angle around where the cabochon will go. When the cork clay is thoroughly dry, transfer it to a playing card. Make leaf elements using clay rolled two/three cards thick. Place these around the cork clay to dry but don't worry about the design yet.



STEP 5
Cut more leaves than necessary as they can break easily. When the leaves are dry, carefully refine the edges using an emery board. Refine the edges of the dried pendant too. Put some paste on the back edges of the cork clay plug and stick it in place on the pendant. The secured cork clay will be used to support the final placement of the leaves. Allow this to dry.

STEP 6
Decide which leaves to use around the cork clay plug. Make sure the leaves will hold the cabochon securely by placing them on all sides, although they don't need to completely enclose it. The idea is for the leaves to act like prongs. Aim for at least three prongs; the shape of the cabochon will dictate where best to place them. Experiment until you get a design you like.



RESOURCES

Silver metal clay, cork clay:
www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk

Cabochons:
www.designercabochons.co.uk

PME plastic leaf cutters:
www.cake-links.com

StazOn alcohol ink:
www.craftcraft-uk.co.uk

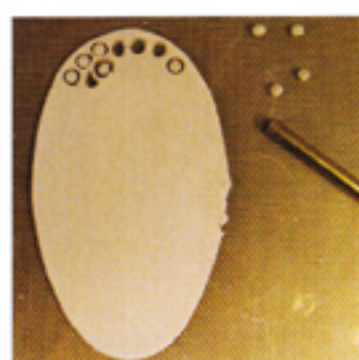
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INTERMEDIATE PROJECT



STEP 7
Using thick paste, stick the leaves in place around the cork clay plug. They should be standing up around the plug, not bending over it. Clean any stray paste as you go and leave it to dry. Reinforce the inside of the joins with paste and make sure the leaves are firmly stuck to the surface of the pendant. Refine the backs of leaves overhanging the edges of the pendant.

STEP 8
To make balls for embellishment, roll out silver clay to two or three cards thick and cover with cling film so it stays moist while you work. Use a circle cutter to cut a few equal sized pieces and form them into balls by rolling them on a ceramic tile. Nesting brass tubes allow you to make balls of varying sizes. Make extra and keep them for future use.

STEP 9
Stick the balls in place using thick paste or syringe for precision. Balls grouped in clusters of three look great. Clean the excess paste away with a damp paintbrush so the balls look neat. Allow the balls to dry. Further embellish the pendant using syringe lines to resemble vine tendrils. Dampen the surface with a paintbrush dipped in water before adding syringe lines so it sticks well. Dry the pendant thoroughly.



STEP 10
To form the bail, roll out a thin snake of clay around 2cm long, bend it over a drinking straw and allow it to dry. File the ends at an angle so they form an open 'U' shape with one 'leg' longer than the other. Use thick paste to attach the bail to the back of the pendant in the top third so it hangs properly. Allow to dry.

STEP 11
Fire the pendant at 900°C for two hours for maximum strength. This is important as the leaves will be bent over the cabochon after firing. Torch firing may not be sufficient to create strong enough leaves. Brush and polish the fired pendant. Use a warm, weak solution of Liver of Sulphur and dip the pendant if you like an oxidized finish. Polish again to highlight the high spots.

STEP 12
Set the stone by holding it firmly while easing the leaf prongs over the edges of the stone using a burnisher. Bend prongs on opposing sides of the stone in a north, south, east, west sequence. Work carefully to avoid slipping and scratching the stone or the pendant surface. Add gold alcohol ink to the leaves with a fine paintbrush and allow to dry. Hang the pendant on a torque.



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Tan belt, £49
www.houseoffraser.co.uk

Tote bag, £169,
www.radley.co.uk

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RING

The leaf cutters also make great embellishment for a special occasion ring. Attach leaves to a textured ring band, add

balls, cubic zirconias or other embellishments and create a unique ring just for you.

