

Making Ripples

DIY Fall Fun

by Amanda Bancroft

It's officially autumn! For a quick and easy fun fall craft that even smaller children can do, try leaf splatter paintings. Collect your favorite leaves based on their silhouette or shape – not their colors. It's the outline of the leaf you're going for, instead of the usual gorgeous autumn palette. Once you have your leaves, place them flat onto a piece of paper that can hold paint well. Dip an old toothbrush or scrub brush (anything with bristles will do fine) into poster paint, and flick droplets of paint around the edges of the leaves. Make sure to put more dots of paint close to the edges, and fewer the further away you get. Then remove the leaves and admire your splatter painting!

A leaf mobile is a great way to capture and display the colors of fall in your home. Go outside for a leisurely fall hike and select about ten leaves that you really love. Then find thin sticks of various lengths. Get some contact paper and cut two squares for each leaf, so they'll fit in between. Peel back one piece of contact paper, stick the leaf onto it, and cover it with the second piece so it's essentially laminated. Do this for every leaf, then cut carefully around them to shave off as much excess contact paper as possible. Creatively hang the leaves on your branches with string by poking a small hole into the top of each leaf and attaching the string. If you hang them in a place that can catch the breeze, their movement is eye-catching!

For more of a challenge, gourd birdhouses or feeders are fun too. Ron & Pat Duncan, known as The Gourd Couple of Prairie Grove, have been designing gourd crafts for years and have an array of options. Contact them at duncanr@pgtc.com or view their gourds at the Fayetteville Farmer's Market and Heartwood Gallery. To make your own gourd birdhouse, first grow a gourd in your garden or purchase one of the ideal size for your project (10 inches wide or more). Then clean the gourd with soapy water and apply rubbing alcohol to the surface. Dry it inside and out – this may take months – in a warm place, checking for decay. When the gourd is lightweight and you hear seeds rattling around, it's ready. Using a key hole saw or drill, cut a hole about three inches wide. Then cut holes into the bottom, for drainage. Don't attach a perch – predators can grab onto it and attack the birds. Cut a hole near the top for stringing wire through it for hanging. It's better if you don't paint the gourd, as keeping it natural helps protect the birds' health. Enjoy these fall projects, and create some new ones of your own!

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