

Boundary Way

Allotment Printmaking with artist Linda Nevill

Relief/surface printing using leaves and plants

A quick guide to materials and method



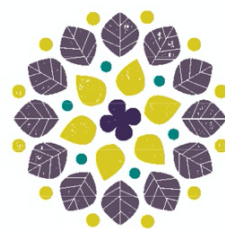
Image Credit: Linda Nevill

Materials needed

A roller, ink, a tray, perspex or similar to roll the ink out, thin paper, a spoon or baren, leaves, plants, flowers.

Method

- Assemble your equipment
- Pick some leaves or use ones that you have picked and pressed earlier
- Roll ink onto the leaves
- Put some paper on top
- Press onto the back of the paper, using fingers, spoon or baren
- Lift off to reveal your beautiful print
- Repeat, perhaps with a different colour ink, to create a more complex design



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Details of the process

Materials and equipment

You will need at least one **roller** and some printmaking **ink**. I use a water-based bottle of non-toxic relief ink when printmaking outdoors as it's easily washed off with water and is safe in the environment. Other options include acrylic paint – be aware that this dries very quickly so wash your roller promptly. You also need something to roll your ink out on and a spoon or something to rub on the back of the paper to transfer the ink to the paper. I often use a baren – which is used in Japanese woodcut printing. It is a piece of bamboo which is stretched tight over a thin, flat base and the slight ridges in the bamboo help in the pickup of ink. I use a cheap, plastic ink tray to roll my ink out on but any smooth surface will do.

Leaves, plants and flowers

If you pick and print them the same day they are usually easy to work with. If need to you leave them for a day, press them between some paper with a book on top. An old phone book is a useful travelling leaf press. Leaves that get very dry can become brittle. Flowers are more difficult to print as they are much more delicate you need a light touch and to be prepared for bit to fall off into your ink.

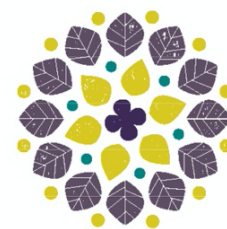
My favourites at the moment are cabbage and sprouts leaves, nasturtiums, carrots, beetroot and all the herbs. The fragrance of the herbs as you press them with an inky roller is lovely!

Rolling out the ink

Work the ink with the roller, moving it backward and forwards, lifting it from time to time. You are aiming at a thin layer of ink that makes a slight hissing sound as you move the roller.

Put ink onto the leaves

Roll a thin layer of ink onto the leaves. If you put ink on the back of the leaves you are more likely to highlight the raised veins. If you press hard and/or put a lot of ink on a leaf you will get a solid colour with less detail. If you put much too much ink on, you will get a squidgy blob!



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Further details of the process

Put your paper on top

Place your inked up leaves on a clean surface which could be a piece of clean paper. Place your printing paper on top of the leaves. Computer printer paper works well, oriental paper is also easy to print with as it is strong and thin. Almost any smooth paper will work but thin paper is easiest. I printed the small greetings cards on Fabriano Rosapina printing paper. It's thick enough to stand up as a card but quite pliable so not difficult to print on.

Ideas for developing a print further

- Print additional leaves or flowers in a different coloured ink onto the same paper, overlapping some of them on the layer beneath.
- Collage something onto your print paper before you begin. Tissue paper or a drawing would be good. I showed an example of a small lino print of a goldfinch printed on a luggage tag.
- Print onto a long piece of paper that can be folded up to create a concertina style book




Results

What do you get out of this kind of printing?

- Beautiful nature prints, some of which you might want to send to someone as a card or artwork, especially appreciated by those self-isolating or shielding at the moment.
- Experience of the fragrance of plants, especially herbs as you press them
- An awareness of the intricate patterns of nature which are highlighted by the ink
- A stronger connection with nature and a feeling of well being

With thanks to artist Linda Nevill for collating this inspiring resource - www.lindanevill.com

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