

Diane's Innovative Miniatures

Flowers and Greenery

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In 1982, I won Best of Show out of 272 entries at one of the biggest cake shows in the United States. The competition was fierce and I had entered the show for 9 years before I finally received "Best of Show". The entry was a gumpaste miniatures scene of a magic show in the woods with little bunnies in costumes. The "Magician and His Family" presented the well-known act called "The Floating Lady". The lady actually appeared to be floating. My husband, Steve, was a magician at that time, so I was well aware of how to give that effect. I brought my "magic show", or shall we say, "magic touch" as my good friend, the late Mary Beth Enderson, told me to do, to the ICES Convention and Show in Rochester, Minnesota. From those words, I adopted the name of my present business, "The Magic Touch". I am well known internationally for my wood grain effects using the "wire brush" that I introduced to the sugar art world in 1982 and gumpaste miniatures. Eventually, I began to introduce new and innovative techniques and methods to the sugar art world. I will now show how to make these innovative, tiny, miniature flowers for scenery.



This is the picture of my "Best of Show" and "Decorators Choice" award at the 2012 White Rose Cake Show in York, Pennsylvania. The close-ups give ideas of how I use my flower technique for flowers and for leaves in trees.

This display is about 22" x 22" and had to be carried on a larger piece of plywood. It took 5 months to complete. Notice the different shapes and flowers. This is accomplished by using the needle point end of the curve tool to shape the flowers as you work, picking up the tiny pieces of gum paste from the rolled-out log. Some flowers, as you can see, do look like petal flowers.

Diane Shavkin's Gumpaste Recipe

1. Make a water bath in the sink with hot water.
2. Place 3 oz. of warm water into a glass measuring cup.
3. Add 1½ Tbs. glucose and stir with a wooden spoon.
4. Place the measuring cup with ingredients into the hot water bath.
5. Heat a glass bowl under hot running water (as hot as you can stand).
6. Dry the bowl, and grease lightly with shortening.
7. Into this hot bowl, place 1¼ lbs. confectioners sugar that has been sifted with 1½ tbs. gum tragacanth.
8. Make a well and add the water and glucose mixture.
9. Stir until unable to keep stirring.
10. Remove mixture from the bowl and place onto a greased work surface (I like Crisco®), where about 3 ounces of confectioners sugar has been place.
11. Knead well, make a ball, grease the ball with Crisco® and cover with plastic wrap. Place in a covered container. Allow to sit at least 24 hours before using!
12. Rework before using.

Note: Gumpaste should be worked/kneaded every 2 weeks to prevent spoilage and hardness. The inside of the gumpaste will begin to look like a lot of air has been incorporated and will not look smooth. To stop this process, the gumpaste must be worked.

Diane's Pastillage Recipe

Use the Gumpaste Recipe and leave out the glucose. Pastillage may be used immediately after making.

The difference between gumpaste and pastillage is that pastillage is porous and dries super hard. It is good for pieces where strength is important, such as structures, and for the "old rocks and wood effects" because it soaks up the liquid stain (food coloring and an alcohol based liquid). Pastillage dries fast and has a shelf life of about 5 days. Gumpaste has elasticity and can be rolled out thin for flowers. I love this recipe for my work, especially for the gumpaste animals.

A bit of information:

1. The grass groupings and the long leaves groupings must be created first and allowed to dry because the tiny flowers need a sturdy base in order to be secured into place.
2. These are the two red-handled tools (sold in a set of three tools) that I find best for shaping the grass and leaves. I also like to use the "Curved Tool", not only for grass and leaves, but also for daisy petals, bunny ears and mouths.

3. For my animal miniatures, I prefer my gumpaste recipe. For rocks, wood effects and other items that need strength I prefer my pastillage recipe. For the woodland accessories, I like my recipe or Satin Ice gumpaste. When I mix fondant in with my gumpaste for flowers, for example, I prefer FondX.

How to Make the Greenery:

1. Make a ball of green gumpaste, roll into a log and flatten with the palm of your hand.
2. Pinch the upper parts of the flattened gumpaste to make the area where the grass/leaves will be cut thinner.
3. Cut fringe pieces along the entire length and roll up in a bunch to make the grouping of grass. Pinch the bottom area to make a stand and let dry overnight.
4. When the grass is dry, the flowers may be added.



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How to Make the Flowers:

1. Roll out a piece of pink gumpaste (fondant mixed with gumpaste may be used) super thin so that you can see through it. Do not be concerned if it tears as these torn pieces can be used.
2. Take the long needle point of the curved tool and pick up tiny pieces to form the flower grouping. As this is being done, think "flowers" and pick up the pieces with this thought in mind as well as the size, length, roundness and shape of the grouping. The point of the needle tool can be used more on the side near the point. Experiment to get different effects. I have even created a mini water lily using this technique in picking up the pieces. Larkspur simulated flowers are great shapes, too.
3. To adhere the flowers, dampen the bottom of the flower or the grass area where the flowers are to be placed with water using an artist's brush.
4. Put each grouping of flowers in place and use the needlepoint to shape if need be. Think "flowers" all the time this is being done in order to assist in getting floral effects.

When the pieces are picked up with the needlepoint of the tool, they are bunched together in the desired floral or leaf shape. The picture to the right shows the leaves individually and when bunched.

Note: A nice effect is to use a mixture of colors, for example, yellow, white and pink gumpaste, roll into a ball, roll into a log and roll out thin so that all three colors may be seen. Pick up different colors to give a more interesting effect to your floral groupings.



How to Make the Long Leaves Groupings:

1. After the log has been rolled out and the upper edge pinched for thinness, cut long strips with your long spatula or longer scissors. Cut each strand into a point. Use one of the red-handled tools to press down and make a shape of interest. The curved tool may also be used.
2. Roll into a group and secure with water. Hang upside down to dry.

Note: Make several groups and put them together before they dry to make larger groupings. The freshly-made grass or leaves may be glued into place in your scene before it dries. Once dried, the flowers may be added.

Leaves for Trees:

The same technique of picking up pieces with the needle tool applies.

Wide leaves that would represent plants of this nature may also be created using this technique. Just make the leaves the width, length and shape desired. Once the groupings are created, each strand of grass or each leaf may be flipped over to give interest and represent how the plant's leaves appear in nature.

After the items dry, they may be painted with color that has been mixed with a clear, alcohol-based liquid. 🍷

