

How to make your own wall art motifs from plant leaves and fronds

By Julie Rogers

Palm Frond Wall Motif

Doing the wall motif is similar to doing a stencil. A stencil is a thin sheet of plastic or metal with a pattern or letters cut out of it, used to produce the cut design on the surface below by applying paint through the cut outs.

This method is like a reverse stencil. You will be painting around the design (frond)

What you will need:

- palm frond(s) or leaves - Pressed
- 2 paint colors - one for wall, one for leaf
- paint rollers 1 small (narrow), 2 standard size
- blue painters tape - narrow
- small, **stiff, flat tipped** artist brush

Leaf preparation:

Press **leaves** between newspapers for 2-3 weeks to draw out some of the moisture. I put my paper covered fronds under a carpet for weight. My fronds were 6-8 feet long.

Choosing your colors:

Select the **color** you want for the wall. Depending on the size of your wall you may need a quart or two. For a **shadow effect**, make the color for the leaf **50% darker**. You will need a quart for this. Any paint store can do the 50% darker mix. Note, you can reverse this with a darker wall color, and lighter leaf color.

Marking the leaf area:

Roughly attach the frond to the wall using pieces of blue tape. This may require using long pieces of tape just to hold it up. Using a pencil, mark the wall where the leaf tips end. These marks will give you an area for applying the LEAF color. Remove the frond

LEAF color paint:

Apply LEAF color using a **standard roller**. Roll on color about 2 inches larger than the area you have marked in pencil. Let dry for a day.

Use blue tape to reattach the frond:

Tear blue tape into dozens of 2-3 inch pieces and several 24-30 inch pieces, depending on the size of the leaf, you may need less. The longer pieces will hold the frond (especially the stem) in place while you attach the small pieces of blue tape to the individual leaflets.

Secure the frond to the wall over the area previously painted with LEAF color, using long blue tape, especially at the bottom end of the palm.

Once the frond is securely fixed to the wall, use small tape to hold down each leaflet of the frond.

The tape will go over each leaflet and attach to the wall between the leaflets. Sometimes you can hold down several leaflets at the same time using longer pieces of tape.

Start taping about 1 inch from the main rib (middle of frond) and work your way out to the tip. Don't worry that there is a space where the rib meets the leaflet. Place tape every couple of inches until you get near the tip of the leaflet. Leave about an inch of the tip un-taped. Don't be concerned about the gaps between the wall and the rib or stem as they do not lay flat.

WALL color paint:

Use the **narrow roller**, and begin rolling from the main rib (middle of the leaf) all the way past the tip about 2 inches past. You will be painting over the entire leaf (tape and the leaf).

The roller may cover several leaflets at a time. Continue rolling from the rib(middle) past the tips. Because of the shape of the rib meeting the leaflets and the end stem, the roller may not be able to touch the wall. That's OK. the next step will address this. Be sure you are covering all the color as much as possible.

After you have rolled over the entire frond with the narrow roller, **finish painting the rest of the wall** with the other **standard roller**.

Filling in where the roller could not reach:

Before removing the frond, with the artist brush and the WALL color, and a tapping motion, fill in each of the little areas where the rib meets the leaf and then along the stem. Try to get in as close as you can. The tapping will give you a softer line in that small space rather than trying to give it perfectly smooth edges.

Stand back occasionally, to see if you have missed any spaces.

The paint will be starting to dry so carefully **remove the frond**. Loosen the blue tape and lift off the frond.

You will need to cover the areas left under the blue tape, with the WALL color paint.

This next step takes a little concentration.

With the artist brush, only paint the spaces between the leaflets. Do not paint the entire space where the tape was because you will be painting over the LEAF painted area.

Stand back to find un-painted areas. Should you accidently paint the leaf area with the WALL color, use a clean art brush, and go over the leaflet area with the LEAF color.

Note: You can practice this technique on a board using small leaves such as lauae fern.