

Cindy Drozda

Tools and Supplies for Gilding with Composition Metal Leaf

Tools:

- Soft bristle brush for applying the “Size” (adhesive). A brush with a flat end works well. Choose a size of brush that works well with the size of surface to be gilded. If you are doing a natural edge rim, or small areas, a narrow brush such as 1/4” or smaller works well. For larger areas, use a wider brush. Soft bristles will leave fewer noticeable brush marks.
- Soft “Mop” Style brush for tamping metal leaf

Supplies:

Metal Leaf. Composition Metal Leaf is the type of leaf that you can buy at Michaels. It is available in a variety of metal looks, including Copper, Varigated, and imitation Silver or Gold. Solvent and a jar or other container for cleaning brushes. This can be mineral spirits, lacquer thinner, or water for water based size. Water based size doesn’t completely clean off the brush with just water.

Gilder’s Size (the adhesive). I recommend an oil based quick drying gilder’s size. Water based size will be offered at Michaels, and it does “work”, but the gilded surface might remain somewhat tacky forever. A slow drying varnish, or one that has extender added, is also good. Any finish that will remain tacky for the period of time that it takes you to lay the metal leaf will work.

A place to work that is free from drafts or fans or wind blowing. Free from dust is also a good idea.

Wax paper, Saran wrap, or other flexible plastic sheet if you are gilding a Sea Urchin shell.

Paper towels for cleanup.

Single layer cardboard (like the backing from a note pad, but without glossy coating), brown paper bag, or very fine abrasive (4000 grit or finer) for cleaning off excess leaf from where you don’t want it.

Optional but suggested is a topcoat for the Composition Metal Leaf. This should be a clear coating that will not impart color to the metal leaf. Before topcoating, the copper can be patinated with chemicals for a different look.

What else you will need:

A Practise Board. This can be a piece of plywood or flat lumber, sanded and finished to be non porous and smooth. It should be finished in a similar way to the piece you are planning to gild.

A Finished piece for gilding. This can be a woodturning, Sea Urchin Shell, or other solid object. Gilding on paper is also done. Plastic or resin might work, too.

Surface to be gilded must be completely sealed so that it is non-porous. Otherwise, the adhesive might not dry evenly and the metal leaf won’t adhere properly. The surface must be as good looking as you wish your gilding to be. Gilding will not cover up sanding scratches, tearout, tool marks, or

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brush marks. A glossy surface gives the look of molten metal. A matte surface that's been sanded will give a softer look.

A Sea Urchin Shell (or similar piece) needs to be well sealed before gilding. A product like Mod Podge, or diluted PVA (white) glue, works well. Acrylic paint also works well if you want color and/or to gild only parts of the piece. If you are going to gild a Sea Urchin or other shell, it's helpful to create a way to hold on to it while sizing and gilding to keep fingerprints off.

Surface to be gilded could be the entire piece, or parts of it. When gilding parts of a piece, it works best to have the area to be gilded delineated by either a hard edge of turning (such as the natural edge rim of a bowl or the edges of voids), a pyrographed line, turned vee grooves, or masking tape.

It is helpful to have a way to hold onto the piece to be gilded. This can be a dowel, jam chuck, or other device. You won't want to touch the wet size surface, or the gilding.