

# AUTUMN LEAVES

## *Playful Techniques for The Embellisher with Paula Scaffidi*

### *Tools:*

Water soluble marking pen  
Fabric scissors (short blades, sharp tips are ideal)  
Paper scissors  
5" spring ring hoop with tapered rim

### *Supplies:*

10 inch lengths of roving in any 5 autumn colors (Ex: rose, taupe, green, yellow, and gold)  
24 inch length of perle cotton #5 in any autumn color, medium-dark in value  
6" x 6" square of Wash-Away Embroidery Stabilizer



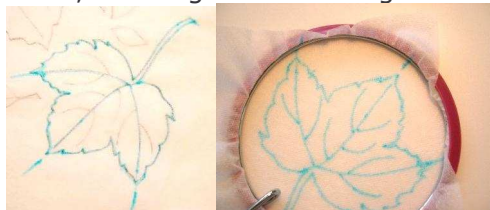
*This leaf...* is really a study in creating softly blended shadings, gradually building toward the making of soft lines, and finally making more crisp and distinct lines. It's visual edge control. This way of working can be applied to any motif you wish to create, or to an entire textile artwork. Keep in mind as you work, in machine needle felting, the roving is driven from the top to the underside by the needles.

Enjoy!

Paula Scaffidi, aka Fiberella

### *Let's begin...*

1. Place the stabilizer on top of the leaf pattern, angling the stem toward a corner of the stabilizer and centering the main part of the leaf as best you can. Trace the entire leaf using a water soluble pen, extending the three main vein lines about 1/2 inch beyond the edges of the leaf. Now place the stabilizer in the 5 inch tapered hoop, centering the main part of the leaf area inside the circle, allowing the stem to go out of the usable work area.



Trace and hoop, noting placement.

2. Apply the roving. Pull an inch or two off of the end of any color and lay on top of the leaf area. On The Embellisher, there is a knob up top that adjusts the cloth presser height. With the lever for the cloth presser foot is in the down position, adjust this knob so that there is no restriction of movement with the roving in place. There also should not be so much clearance that materials can bounce up and down. Lower the Embellisher needles into the center of the roving by turning the hand wheel toward you. Smooth the roving to both sides of the needles. This helps keep the roving from getting caught on the top of the cloth presser ring.
3. Begin machine needle felting, starting out with a slow to medium speed. Start moving the hoop back and forth and from side to side, gently tacking the roving down in all directions. At first just tack lightly into place, then use small circular motions to go over the entire area, taking care to move the hoop smoothly. Avoid tugging or pulling on the needles.
4. Visually play, arranging colors as you please. Tack down, a color or two at a time. As you lay more roving, continue to adjust the height of the cloth presser foot as needed. Hand turning the needles into the stabilizer each time you begin helps to avoid a jerky start that can bend needles. *Raise needles fully and raise the cloth presser foot lever before attempting to remove the hoop* so you can see how well the underside is filling in. Work from the same side so you can find out how softly you can blend on the top side with needle felting. Picture at the right shows the underneath with almost enough roving.



Rovings blend to form new hues.  
The soft appearance created on top,  
appears even softer on the bottom side.

5. *Design Tip:* Hold rovings up to the light to see what happens when you blend colors. Opposite colors, like reds and greens, form interesting neutrals when felted together. Yellows act as a nice bridge color between warm and cool, forming lovely new hues when combined with either temperature. If you like how the two rovings look when held up to the light, you will like the result when you felt them together.
6. It's ok if you go outside the outline edges a bit, but try to keep the general leaf shape. Cover the entire leaf area, softly blending colors and criss-crossing the direction of the roving applications as you go, aiming for an even application in terms of thickness. Avoid heavy applications in just one area with repeated needling...unless you want to go sculptural (which could be fun for something else)! If this does happen you can always steam press it out *at the end...remember, the stabilizer will vanish with steam*. Occasionally stop and remove the hoop to better feel the thickness with your hands. If you like, opt to lose the hoop when it is sturdy enough to work without it. *Hold up to the light to identify thin areas that require more roving*. Keep adding roving

'til you have a nice even application and are satisfied with the colors. *For a soft drape-able result, stop when you can just barely see the water soluble lines while holding your leaf up to the light. For a sturdier leaf, work a bit beyond that point, still striving for an even thickness.*

7. *Design Tip:* It's ok if your leaf appears blurry or blob like, not looking like much of anything at this stage. In fact, it's good. Once the crisper lines of the veins and the outside edges are cut, it will come together nicely. Hang in there!
8. Remove the leaf from the hoop. Which side do you like best? Notice how even the softest shading you did on top, is softer still in its coloration on the bottom. Choose your favorite side to apply veins to. Create the main veins starting with the center one. Here's how to twirl some roving to form a yarn: Peel a thin strip off of your roving; it could be a little wider than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. It should be about three or four inches in length. Grasp each end with your thumb and forefingers. Holding your hands apart to create a gentle tension, twirl in opposite directions as you gently pull your hands apart. Continue to add twist as you separate your hands. The farther apart your hands, and the more twist you add, the thinner and harder the line will be visually after machine needle felting it. Try making a thicker vein, possibly tapered for the center one. Attach, starting at the base of the leaf, working toward the edges.

*Design Tip:* Continue making and attaching veins. Select different roving colors to both contrast and match various areas in your leaf. This way they will blend in a bit more in some areas, and be more distinct in others. You can even twirl more than one color together, candy cane style.

Add the stem and vein lines, working from largest to smallest. Check the pattern for ideas about vein placement if you like.



9. For a finishing touch use the tighter twist perle cotton to create a crisper line, further defining some veins in your leaf, while opting to leave the appearance of other veins softer. Without cutting the length of the perle cotton, put one end at the base of the leaf and run it out to the tip of the leaf alongside the center yarn vein you made earlier. "Couch" the cotton on, moving slowly in a gentle zig-zag motion, allowing The Embellisher to take up the perle cotton at it's own pace. Guide it to the tip of the leaf.
10. *Design Tip:* Add a bit of this crisper look, here and there, wherever you would like to see a bit more definition. In nature, rarely do lines have the same degree of hardness and softness over great distances. This variation helps to create a more natural feeling to your leaf.

11. Cut out your leaf. If you can't see the stabilizer, you can either eyeball the leaf shape (though the architecture of a maple leaf is a bit challenging) or simply cut out the paper one, laying it over your roving, and copy-cut along the edges. If you can still see the stabilizer fairly well, work with that. Either way, wiggle your scissors to get a stair step effect as you work your way around the leaf. Zig-zag cut a bit, alternating with little scallops to add interest along the edge.

The visual combination of angular and rounded scissor cuts, curved and straight edges, will add a great dynamic to the blurry outer edge. Any stabilizer remaining visible after cutting will wash away. Here's what mine looked like before cutting out, defining the outer edge.



Notice how the veins both blend in and contrast the leaf. Also note the taper of the center stem.



Can you see the finished back is very soft in appearance, while the finished front is crisper in this design?  
How else could you approach making a leaf?

12. *Design Tip:* If any section of the veins appear extremely harsh to your eye, just add a bit more roving over the vein line to "blur" it a bit. Or here's another way. Identify the area you wish to soften visually. Find that same location on the reverse side. Feel through with your fingers and then, hold that spot visually, pointing at it as you move it to the machine. Slide the desired location under the cloth presser foot. Machine needle felt this area with the vein itself on the underside. This will drive roving through the layers and cover up some of the crispness of the vein line.

13. At last...Re-cut your edges to keep them defined and a bit crisper, as needed.

Now you have a great combination of softly blended areas, lines of some distinction and a few lines that are even crisper...plus the nicely cut scissor outline. What a great combination for the eye!

## To Order:

This leaf is part of a four – five hour SIMPLE PROJECT from Fiberella. The rest of the project goes very fast and includes more fun techniques to play with while exploring design.

Go to [www.Fiberella.com](http://www.Fiberella.com), click on SIMPLE PROJECTS and then on Art Scarf.

Includes supplies, printed directions and *access to viewing online video clips!*

SIMPLE PROJECTS from Fiberella will be available for shipping beginning sometime in February, 2005.

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