

Faux Foliage Rug

Walk barefoot
on suede leaves

First, cut leaf shapes from faux suede—Ultrasuede for the luxe version or doe suede for an economical version. Then sew the leaves on a canvas backing for a nature-inspired throw rug. This project is quick to sew, but cutting the leaves does take some time. But the results are worth it; this rug is luxurious under foot and handsome enough to hang on a wall. To speed the cutting process, you could use simple fabric strips or squares instead of leaf shapes.

Make it in your favorite autumnal color scheme or in spring greens. Just choose natural colors from your favorite season for a spectacular rug.

—JUDITH NEUKAM

Cut the leaves and prep the canvas

Determine your desired rug size, and calculate its area in square inches. Then use that measurement to create a grid on which you'll sew the leaves on every corner of each square.



Use scissors to cut the leaves from the suede.

PHOTOS: SLOAN HOWARD, (P. 80) STYLIST: JESSICA SAAL



Supplies

- Canvas
- Doe suede
- Optional:
 - > Drop cloth
 - > Spray paint
 - > Ultra Suede
 - > Natural Suede

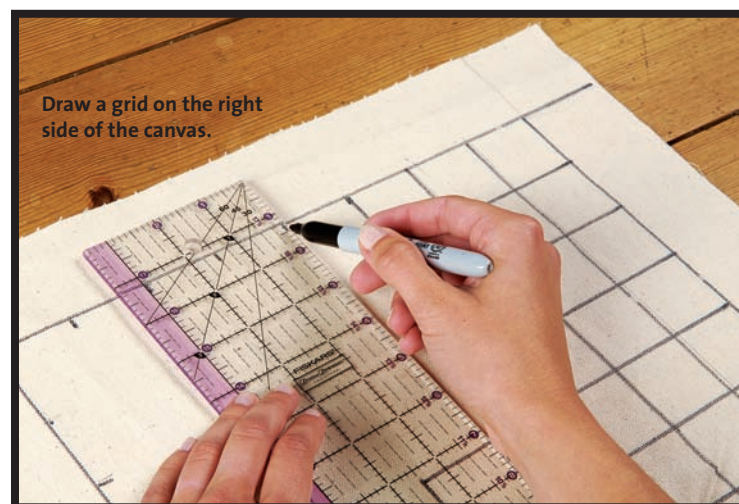
tip

MAKE IT A PARTY

It's a job for one person to cut all those leaves—but invite a few friends over and it's an event. Just trace the leaves on the fabric's wrong side and give each person a pair of scissors.

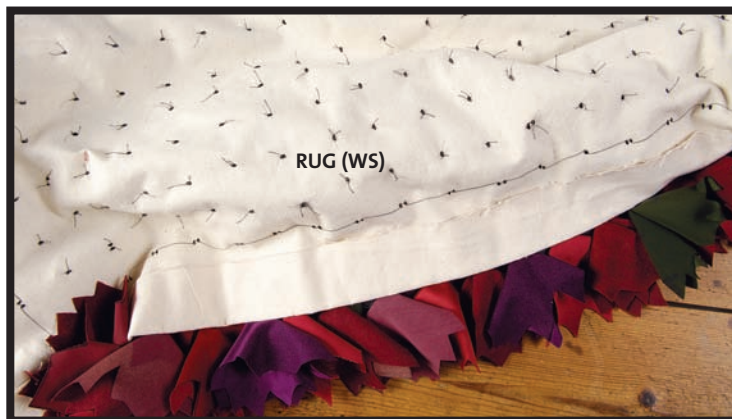
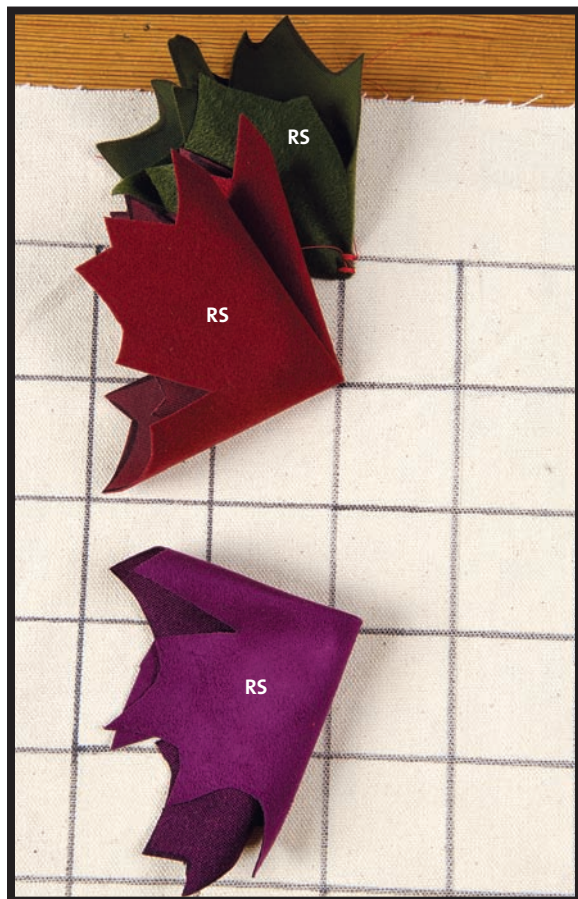
{1} CUT THE LEAVES. Use the pattern provided on page 94, and cut as many leaves as you need. You can get 50 to 100 leaves from a yard of 60-inch-wide fabric, depending on how you space them. This will help you approximate how much fabric you'll need to buy.

{2} MARK THE CANVAS WITH A GRID. Determine how dense you want the rug. Draw a grid on the right side of the canvas the distance you want to position the leaves apart. On the rug shown, the leaves are $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch apart. Then add a 2-inch-wide border for the hem. The finished rug shown is 36 inches by 47 inches, and it took 744 leaves to make it.



Sew on the leaves, and hem the edges

Turn and flip the leaves in various positions as you tack them to the canvas. Fold them in loose quarters so the bar-tack stitching goes through four layers. To freshen your rug, you can wash it and dry it in a dryer, but don't vacuum it, take it outside and shake it instead.



1} ATTACH THE LEAVES. To attach a leaf to the corner of a square, pick up the leaf from the center of the right side, place it on the canvas, and bar-tack the point of fabric to the canvas, as shown at left. Turn the leaves in different directions when you bunch them.

Bar-tack the leaves to the corners of the squares. Turn each leaf before you attach it so the shapes all look different. To vary appearance, fold a few wrong-side out occasionally, too.

tip

GET YOUR BEST PATTERN FROM NATURE

Different leaf shapes create different looks. Study leaves around you and how they look on the ground. Also, study their color for inspiration.

Turn over a new leaf

The rug shown here is doe suede, which is soft and washable. You can buy it at local fabric stores when it's in season, but it's available online year round. If you want to make a more deluxe version, here are some other options:

Ultrasuede

Like doe suede, Ultrasuede is hard-wearing, washable, and dryable, but it has more body, so the leaves will stand up more. But it's narrower, so it will take about 30 percent more yardage to make as many leaves from it, and it can cost about 10 times as much. It's definitely a luxury touch.

Real suede, leather, or a combination

The most economical way to use real suede or leather is to purchase assembly-line scraps from a manufacturer or tanner. Natural suede does require professional cleaning, but a rug made of this material could be quite sturdy, depending on the weight of the skin.

{ 2 } HEM THE EDGES. To hem the edges, turn the canvas edges to the wrong side, and hand stitch. Or, apply a quality fabric glue such as Beacon's Fabri-Tac to the border, turn the edge back, and press with your hands.



Make it more realistic

Spray paints will adhere to the suede and withstand wear. Experiment with different effects and discover what a misting of paint does for your leaves.



Use spray paint to get a mottled effect that resembles the forest floor. On a newspaper or a drop cloth in your yard, scatter the leaves, creating two or even three layers; make the leaves overlap and touch. Then spray a sheer mist of gold, orange, yellow, or purple paint on the edges of the leaves (spray more than one color while you play Mother Nature, if you want). Let the paint dry, and then assemble your rug.

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Copy the template below to create the leaves for the Faux Foliage Rug. We copied ours at 200 percent.

