

# Gold Leaf WEDGES

by Margot Silk Forrest



I am always cruising thrift stores looking for shoes and handbags that can be altered in ways that will totally transform them. I'm never satisfied with adding a couple of bows or some buttons and a splash of paint to a pair of ugly ducklings. I've even been known to cut off T-straps, apply rust-finish paint, and plaster 4 inch heels with Swarovski crystals (though not all on the same shoe). These brown and white canvas wedges with their '70s embroidery cried out for an extreme update. They were also the perfect canvas for a technique I have long wanted to try on shoes: metallic leafing.

I raided our local craft chain store for gold leafing, adhesive, and sealer, gathered some shimmery fabric and lace from my stash and went to work. You'll be thrilled to know that applying metallic leaf — gold, copper, silver, colored or multicolored leaf (like the kind I used) — is quite simple, just a little messy. And it looks fabulous on a broad surface like the sides of a wedge.

## Tools & Materials

- Acrylic paint: black (Jacquard Neopaque)
- Adhesive: (Beacon — Fabri-Tac)
- Cotton balls: (6–10)
- Fabric: (¼ yard or less)
- Fan brush: small, size 1
- Gold leafing: variegated, loose
- Lace: 2" wide, scalloped (14")
- Leafing adhesive
- Leafing sealer
- Masking tape
- Paintbrush: flat, ½ inch flat
- Permanent marker: (Sharpie)
- Printer paper
- Rubbing alcohol (for real leather) or 100% acetone (for manmade leather)
- Scissors
- Sealant: (Pledge Premium Floor Finisher with Future Shine)
- Straight pins
- Tweezer
- Wedges: wooden wedge

## Technique

I altered this pair of sandals in three stages. First, I painted parts of it, then I applied the gold leaf, then I covered the upper (canvas area) with fabric and tacked on a bow.





1. Remove the ankle straps. If these are manmade leather, prep them by rubbing them with a cotton ball moistened with acetone. (If real leather, use rubbing alcohol instead.) Do the same thing with any other manmade leather areas. Paint with Neopaque Black (using the fan brush) and seal with Pledge Floor Finisher. I wanted to paint a wide black margin all the way around the top edge of the wedge, so I used masking tape to create a straight line. Then I prepped and painted the area black and sealed it.



2. The first step to applying the metallic leaf is to brush on a thin coat of sealer (again using the fan brush). When it's dry (about 30 minutes), brush on an equally thin coat of adhesive. Wait until the adhesive is dry but tacky to the touch (30 minutes). Now cover your work surface with a large sheet of paper to catch the inevitable stray flakes of leaf. Then open the bag of flakes and remove a clump with tweezers.



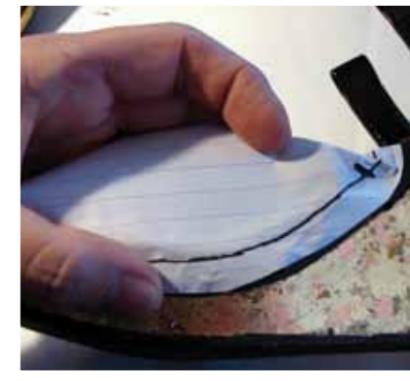
3. Sprinkle them over a section of the wedge. With a wide soft brush, rub the flakes well into the now-tacky surface (FIGS 2 & 3). Spread them around so that any loose flakes or specs get grabbed by the adhesive. Continue working this way until both wedges are covered.

At this point, you'll probably notice that there are some places where the flakes didn't stick. Those are spots that got skipped when you brushed on the adhesive. Dab adhesive on those spots, wait 30 minutes, and apply leafing. When all the leafing is done, brush on a final coat of sealer and let dry.

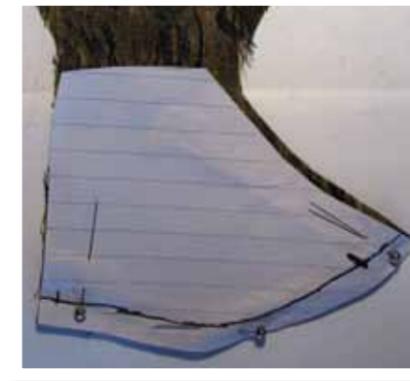
Now the wedges look fabulous, except for their out-of-date canvas uppers. I decided to cover the canvas with a much more interesting fabric, a green jacquard that had a slight metallic tinge. The process for doing this is to carefully shape the fabric to cover the outer face of the canvas, glue that in place, then cut and fold the fabric so it fits over the top and covers the inner face.



4. Start by making a paper template to use when cutting out your fabric. (Do this one shoe at a time — and don't count on the shapes being identical for the second shoe.) Tear a sheet of printer paper in half, then hold it over the outer face of the canvas — that's the side where your little toe is. Using your fingernail, score the paper along the line where the canvas meets the sole. Remove the paper and mark the scored line with a Sharpie. Before cutting out your template, add about ¼ inch to the lower edge so there will be enough fabric to fold under. (You don't want to glue the raw edge of the fabric to the shoe; a fold makes a nice clean finish.)



5. Cut out the bottom edge of the template and hold it up to the shoe, aligning the line you drew with the edge of the canvas. Now cut and fold the paper so it fits over the upper and lower edges of the canvas.



6. Pin your template onto your fabric and cut it out, allowing extra fabric at the upper and lower edges so you can eventually fold those edges under, too. Also, leave plenty of fabric to use for fitting over the inner face of the canvas.



Margot Silk Forrest is the founder of Sassy Feet!, a DIY shoe-design company. She and her creative partner, Destiny Carter, teach classes across California and blog weekly about their adventures painting and embellishing shoes and purses at [glittersweatshop.typepad.com](http://glittersweatshop.typepad.com). For more information and free how-to instructions, go to their website, [sassyfeet.com](http://sassyfeet.com).



7. Iron under the raw edge of your fabric along the fold line. Pin the fabric in place over the outer face of the canvas. Adjust any of the folds as needed, then glue using Fabri-Tac.



8. When the glue has dried, use your pins to shape and fold the fabric over the other half of the upper. You will probably need to trim away excess fabric before folding it. Pin in place, adjust the folds as needed and glue down. A little spring clamp or binder clip can help hold the fabric in place while you adjust it.

Replace the leather strap, cinching it over the upper. Then cut a 7 inch piece of lace trim. Make a simple knot in the center, adjust the bow so it looks equally full on each side, and glue the underside of the knot to the center of the upper. When the glue is dry, trim the ends, if needed. You now have a pair of thoroughly updated and delightful wedges that have totally outgrown their ugly-duck phase.

