



the great treasure hunt

THIS EASTER, GATHER NATURE'S AUTUMN BOUNTY AND CELEBRATE THE WONDER OF IMAGINATION.

WORDS AND STYLING PIA JANE BIJKERK PHOTOGRAPHY CRAIG WALL

ISN'T IT marvellous how leaves are a delightfully free

yet priceless 'toy' for children? Raking them into huge piles in the backyard, then jumping into the middle of each pile and revelling in the autumn crunch before falling to the ground, is just one of the ways to enjoy these gifts from nature — for big kids as much as little ones. Making resplendent leaf masks is another.

This project is a wonderful way to celebrate the change of season and gives the kids a beautiful craft to keep their hands busy over the long weekend in the lead-up to the great Easter egg hunt. The hunt is a chance for them to hone their treasure-seeking skills, too. While they search for delicious eggs, wearing their newly made masks, you'll enjoy a show of little leaf creatures frolicking in your garden.

To assemble the masks, simply cut out a shape of a mask from a piece of recycled cardboard, punch a hole in either side and tie some ribbon through each hole, making sure the ribbon lengths are long enough to reach around the back of your little one's head. (I chose black and chocolate brown velvet ribbons to add an elegant touch to the rabbit and fox shapes I had fashioned.)

Cut out two shapes for eyes. Next, using a hot-glue gun, attach leaves you've collected to the mask. For the most effective results, keep the leaves somewhat similar in type, shape and colour, and arrange them in a pattern.

It's easiest to start at the top of the mask and work your way down so that the glue is not visible.

My favourite foliage includes grevillea, banksia, fig and any heart-shaped leaf. If time is limited, start a treasure hunt for a nice big leaf, then cut two holes for eyes. The ideas are limitless — from creating headdresses in the shape of crowns and crests to making leaf necklaces or brooches using scraps of cardboard.

We are limited only by our imaginations and Easter is such a wonderful time to truly relax and open our minds. There's a beautiful line in *Where The Wild Things Are*, the children's classic by Maurice Sendak, that I've been thinking of while dreaming of leaf masks: "There should be a place where only the things you want to happen, happen." Perhaps we can each create our own version of a magical world this Easter? With the help of some little people and some leaves. *

PIA'S LINK LOVE

For more project ideas and creative stimulation, visit:

- 1 www.pinterest.com/foxslane
- 2 www.pinterest.com/adddesign26
- 3 www.greghatton.wordpress.com
- 4 www.cirque-du-bebe.blogspot.com.au
- 5 www.chunkyhooky.blogspot.com.au

Pia is Country Style's resident blogger at blogs.homelife.com.au/countrystyle