

Lambs Ear Bows

Stachys byzantina

Materials:

- Pruner
- Cardboard box or tray (e.g. soda flats)
- White paper towels
- Old magazines (for pressing the leaves)
- White craft glue
- White paper strips (for supports)
- Cellophane tape
- Thin cord for hanger (e.g. twine, yarn, ribbon)

Picking the leaves:

- Pick fresh leaves any time after the morning dew has dried.
- Six leaves are needed for each bow - one smaller leaf to cover the back and use as a base for the bow, two for side loops, one for the center knot and two for the streamers going down the front.

Drying the leaves:

- Use the cardboard tray (e.g. soda flat) for pressing the leaves, avoiding plastic containers as they do not draw out the moisture.
- Lay all the leaves out flat and top with a paper towel. Then place a magazine on top of the paper towels to lightly press and keep the leaves from curling.
- Let the pressed leaves partially dry for 2 – 3 days. Do not let them dry out completely as they need to be flexible.

Assemble the bow:

- Cut strips of paper 4 – 6 inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide. The size of the paper loop will vary according to the size of the leaf and may need to be adjusted when assembling. These will be used to support the loop of the bow when drying.
- Loop 3 of the paper strips into a circle and secure with tape. Set aside.
- Cut a piece of ribbon, thread, twine, or fishing line to slip into the center loop for a hanger. It is easier to put this in when assembling the bow than after they are completely dry. Set aside.
- Start with a leaf for the base (leaf No. 1) and cut the stem off. Place this base leaf lengthwise, top side down, on the work surface.
- Choose two leaves for the streamers (leaf No. 2 & 3) and glue, right side up, at an angle to represent streamers on a bow. NOTE: Use craft glue sparingly when putting the bow together as excess turns white on the leaves and looks messy.
- Choose two leaves for the loops on the bow (leaf No. 4 & 5). Form a tear-drop shape by gluing the tip of the leaf to the stem and securing them, seam down, to the right and left side of the base with glue. Insert a paper circle into each side loop to keep them from collapsing.
- Take the last leaf (leaf No. 6) and glue the tip of the leaf to the stem edge forming a circle. Insert a paper circle to keep it from collapsing. This will be the center knot of the bow. Before gluing this in place, thread the piece

of ribbon for the hanger through this loop. Finally glue this loop, seam down, in place (opposite direction than the outside loops) between the side loops and be sure that the ribbon ends lay up and out of the way.

- The completed bow can be placed back in the cardboard flat and allowed to dry. This may take weeks depending on the temperature of the room.
- Pull out the paper supports when the leaves are completely dry. NOTE: If it is difficult to get the paper supports out, leave them in place and trim the paper with scissors to hide if necessary.
- Note: Always try to protect dried plant material from excess light and moisture as this can cause discoloration and curling.