



Leaf Weaving

A Technique for Building LEGO® Trees

By Katie Walker

Leaf weaving is a way to weave the branches of LEGO® foliage pieces together. By doing this with multiple leaves, you can create a chain of leaves that can be wrapped into circles, forming different shapes for trees and bushes. You can see four different variations of this technique in the trees behind the wall in the Pool Party scene in Image 1.

Image 2 shows the basic form of the three largest trees in the Pool Party. These were made by weaving 12 large leaves together into a circle. Other sizes and shapes of trees can also be made with this technique.

Weaving Branches Into a Circle. In Image 3.1, the different branches on a large leaf are labeled, starting with A on the bottom branch and going up to D just before the top. (The branch pointing straight up is not labeled.) To weave the leaves together, I interlace the pieces so that all of the lettered branches from one leaf overlap the corresponding branch on the other leaf. It's pretty easy to get branch A and branch B to overlap, as shown in Image 3.2. To get the tips of the leaves



Image 2: Tree with 12 woven leaves

to angle in towards each other in a more triangular shape, you need to weave branches C and D together too (Image 3.3). That part can be hard to do.

To make the tree in Image 2, I connected 12 woven leaves together into a circle. For this version, each leaf connects to the next in the exact same way. As you make the chain of leaves, make sure that each new leaf is always added to the chain in the same way as the previous one. If branch A on the right leaf is going above branch A on the left leaf, then it should go above on all of them. Image 3.4 shows a chain of five leaves woven in this manner. Image 3.5 shows the completed circle of 12 leaves. Connecting the first leaf to the last in order to finish the circle can be tricky, but it is do-able.



Image 3.3: Branches A, B, C, and D all woven together

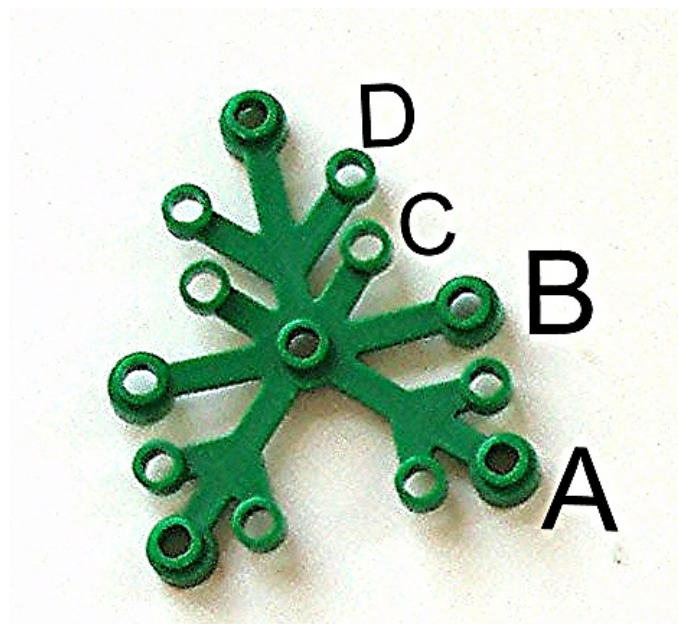


Image 3.1: Labeled Branches Close-up

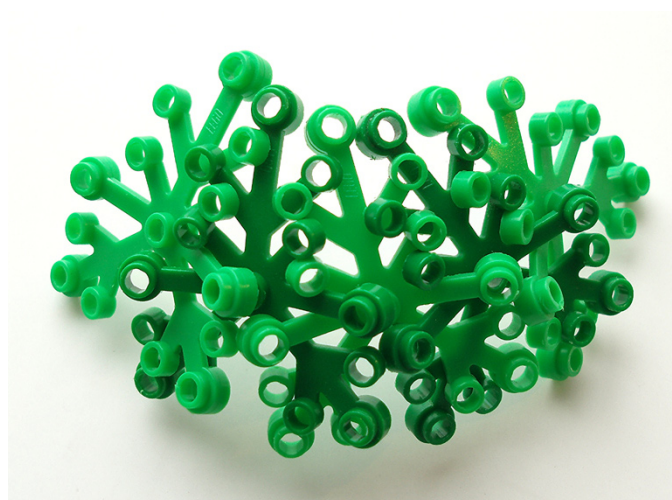


Image 3.4: 5 leaves woven together



Image 3.2: Branches A and B woven together



Image 3.5: 12 leaves woven into a circle

Attaching a leafy circle to a trunk. Image 4 shows one way to attach a leafy circle to a tree trunk. First, I stuck the middle of a single leaf onto the trunk, held in place with a stick. Then I laid the leafy circle on top of that single leaf. Then I fastened it into place by putting a 3-leaf plant onto the center of the leaf that's attached to the trunk; the 3-leaf plant traps the circle into place.

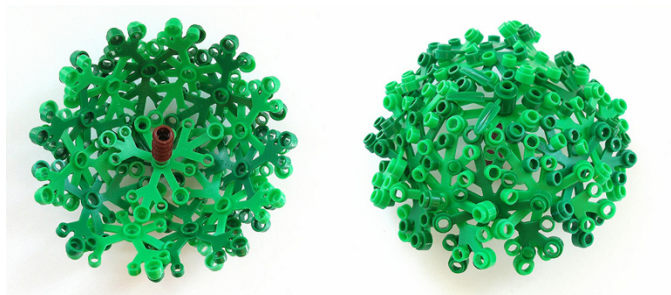


Image 4: Attaching a leafy circle to a trunk

Weaving Small Leaves. Image 5.1 shows a tree made from weaving small leaves together. This tree uses 8 small leaves woven into a circle, with an extra layer of leaves hanging down (Image 5.2). To fasten the leaves to the rest of the tree, there is a 1x3 green brick at the top of the trunk, on the inside of the tree. The completed leaf circle is draped over the 1x3 brick. Then another small leaf is attached to the top of the 1x3 brick by using a couple round 1x1 plates; that leaf holds the rest of the tree in place.



Image 5.1: Tree made with small woven leaves



Image 5.2: Weaving small leaves together

Small bushes. You can also use small woven leaves to make little bushes. My grandparents had a row of bushes just like these in front of their house. Their LEGO® counterparts are made with 8 small leaves woven into a circle. Then stick a green 1x1 cone into the stud at the top of every other small leaf. Stick one more small leaf onto another green cone, and then push that cone through the center holes on top of the bush (between the four other green cones). The cone will pop into place and hold the top leaf in place.

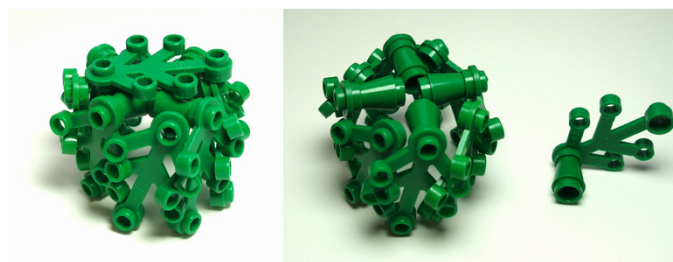


Image 6: Small bushes, made from small woven leaves

Other Ideas. There are many different possibilities for using leaf-weaving techniques. Slightly changing the way leaves are woven together can result in many different shapes.

For example, the boxy-shaped tree in Image 7.1 is made with a different weaving pattern. Instead of adding each leaf to the woven circle in the exact same way (as shown in Image 3.4), this one alternates which branch will go on top. You can see this in Image 7.2, where both of the light green B branches go on top of the neighboring dark green B branches. Also, only branches A and B are woven, and branches C and D are left loose. If you do this with 12 leaves in a row and then connect the ends together, it will make a leafy circle shaped kind of a like a crown.

In Image 7.3 you can see one way to attach this leafy crown to the tree. The green bits sticking on top of the trunk are 5 leaves woven together (as seen in Image 3.4). This leafy piece is stuck onto the trunk with a small stick. Then you can place the leafy crown over the leaves on the pole and push down a little bit. The support leaves will bend and then snap back and hold the crown in place.



Image 7.1: Boxy tree



Image 7.2: Weaving technique for a boxy tree

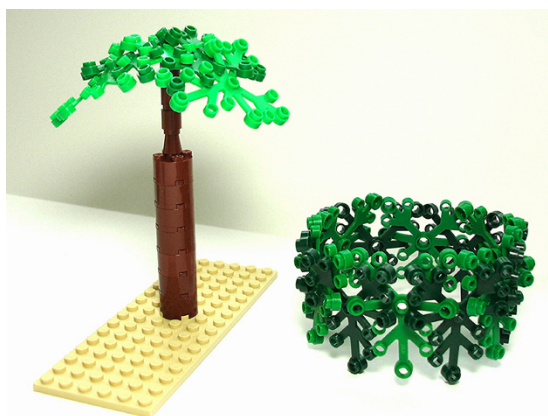


Image 7.3: Attaching leafy circle to the trunk

Image 8 shows a few shrubby little plants made with woven leaves. The one on the left consists of six leaves woven together, then stuck onto a stick coming out of the top of the trunk. The one on the right is five leaves, stuck over a small LEGO® evergreen tree. The plants are a bit messy, but then real plants are not always neat and tidy.

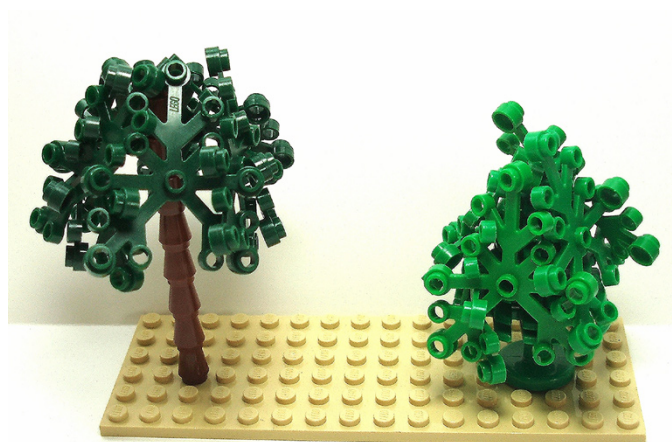


Image 8: Shrubby Little Bits

Does weaving damage the leaves? One of the most common questions I have been asked about this technique is if weaving the leaves together will damage them. I don't think so, but then I have not left my woven leaves together for longer than a few weeks or so. When I take my trees apart, the branches are bent a bit out of alignment. But I then stack them, one on top of each other, and leave them that way for storage. That tends to straighten them out again. The leaves are made out of a fairly flexible plastic, which makes them quite resilient.

I hope this tutorial provides inspiration for some creative tree-building. I have included several resources below which will provide more information on leaf-weaving and other tree-building techniques.

Resources

Tree Techniques Set on flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/eilonwy77/sets/72157629804759804/>

Leaf-Weaving Examples Gallery on flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/eilonwy77/galleries/72157632892361494/>

Classic-Castle's How-To Articles (including several tree tutorials): <http://classic-castle.com/howto/articles.html>

LEGO® Arboretum Group on flickr: http://www.flickr.com/groups/lego_arboretum/
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