

Tips from Lea Stans

“I keep things pretty simple, nothing fancy or expensive is really necessary!”



Bases: I favor Canson art boards (the thick sturdy ones cartoonists and other illustrators use) for the subjects of my pieces. They're tough and glue stays put. They're usually good for the background too. For "irregular" pieces I often use wood shapes from craft stores--so far I haven't had to cut any wood myself.

Frames: Always choose the frame before gluing a single seed!! You need your piece to fit it exactly, and the style you choose is important. I tend to just scour thrift shops or antique stores.

Glue: Elmer's multi-purpose Glue-All (the extra strong formula) is surprisingly tough and holds onto the seeds really well.

Ways to transfer patterns: A good trick, if you're designing it on the computer, is to blow up the design to the size you want with good ol' Microsoft Paint. Then you can cut it out, paste it onto your base and have precise lines to follow.

Tools to place seeds: All I've ever used are wooden toothpicks with a teeny dab of glue on the end. I like to put a squeeze of glue on a flat plastic surface (like a plastic lid or those envelopes with plastic windows) and dab my toothpick in that. Also essential are a small brush, for brushing off excess seeds, and a funnel, for putting the excess seeds back in their containers.

Ergonomic helps: I work at my kitchen table, where the light is brightest and it doesn't matter if I get seeds everywhere. You definitely need a flat surface!

Cutting pieces: If I need to cut out a portrait or some smaller pieces out of the Canson boards I use an X-Acto knife (and patience), then sand and finish the edges.

Seeds: Grocery stores are surprisingly good places to find lots of seeds, from flax seed to quinoa. You can also try bird seeds mixes (if you don't mind sorting through them a bit). Flower seed packets can help but they rarely include enough seeds. You can always buy in bulk online, I find an ounce of seeds can stretch pretty far and it usually only costs a few bucks.

Coloring seeds: So far I haven't used colored seeds.

Seed storage: I love those glass bottles with cork tops that you find at craft stores. Small containers for holding beads work great too, and so do old baby food jars!



Tools



Materials