

Sunflower smile

PENDANT BEADS



‘When I looked a tall sunflower in the face, it smiled at me with all of its seeds’ Nabokov

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These flowers will raise your spirits when you wear them - string one on a leather thong and wear it at the base of the neck. These beads are versatile and can be made in many sizes depending on the cutters you have. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that the petals are robust and do not break off from wear and tear. The flowers can be made in a couple of hours. The clay needs to be extremely well conditioned for this project. Prepare your clay by rolling it out to No. 4 on the pasta machine.

Sunflower centres



1
Cut a medium sized circle of Spanish Olive green clay. Cut out a central hole with a small cutter and fill the hole with gold coloured clay.



2
Place the circles of clay in the daisy centre mould and fill the rest of the mould with green clay so that it takes a good impression.



3
Carefully remove the clay from the mould and you should have a sunflower centre like the photo. Set this to one side while you make the petals.

You will need:

- Premo! Sculpey polymer clay 1oz
- Cadmium yellow, 1oz gold, 1/2oz spanish olive
- Pasta machine
- Acrylic roller
- Needle tool
- Ball tool
- Frilling/veining tool
- Confectioners foam pad
- Blades
- Exacto knife
- Wilton flower forming cups (or a doughnut made of kitchen roll covered with foil)
- Round cutters in two sizes
- Sunflower cutter
- Carnation cutters in two sizes
- Daisy centre moulds (these come in six sizes per pack, choose the size that is right for you)
- Translucent Liquid Sculpey
- Black pastel chalks and gold mica powder, paintbrush
- Toothpick
- Baby wipe
- Knitting needle
- Potters carving tool



POLYMER CLAY



4
Place a sheet of conditioned gold clay over each of the carnation moulds. Roll over the sheet of clay with the acrylic roller - this way the clay is cut as cleanly as possible with minimal raggedy edges. Rub a finger over the clay working from the centre outwards, till the white plastic dividers of the cutter are visible.



5
Put the boning tool in the centre of the cutter and gently push the clay until it is released from the cutter. Place a finger on the centre of the 'carnation' and with the boning tool, stroke each petal gently outwards. If the petals get stuck together, use the Exacto knife to separate them.



6
Use the ball tool to thin out the centre of the flower.



7
Make a second set of petals using the smaller mould. Place the smaller 'carnation' inside the larger one and the central moulded piece in the centre of these two.



8
Curl the 'petals' upwards over the centre piece, and ruffle them gently and set aside.

Sunflower petals



9
Use the cutter to cut out two sunflowers from a sheet of well conditioned yellow clay rolled out at the No 4 setting on the pasta machine.



10
Place them on the foam pad. Place a finger on the centre of the sunflowers to stabilise them and prevent the petals from tearing as you work. Stroke the petals outwards with the veiner/friller tool. The tool is held parallel to the foam pad and three firm strokes made from the centre of the flower outwards on each petal. Do not make the edges of the petal too thin.





11
Assemble the flowers so that the tips of the petals in the second flower show through from behind the flower on top. Place the previously made centre in the flower and press them together gently or attach with a thin layer of liquid clay. Place the flower in the Wilton flower cup, ruffle all the petals and gently cure in the oven according to the manufacturer's instructions, for 30 minutes.

Bead holes and strengthening

12
Apply a gloopy layer of Translucent Liquid Sculpey (TLS) into the gaps between the petals using a toothpick - this is to reinforce the petals and prevent breakage - it will be invisible once cured.



13
Cut one medium and two small circles of yellow clay, place them on top of each other and attach them to the back of the flower with a thin layer of liquid clay. Make a bead hole with the needle tool - as the flowers are top heavy, the hole is best made one third of the way to the top of the bead rather than at the centre.



14
Paint a thin layer of TLS onto the centres of the flowers. Dust the centres with gold and black chalk shavings. Wipe any excess away with a baby wipe and then return to the oven to cure for fifteen minutes.

15
When the flowers are cured, take them out of the oven. As soon as they are cool enough to handle, hold them in the centre of a cupped palm in a stream of cold water. This ensures that the flower sets in a perfect cup shape just as you like, and that the extra TLS applied between the petals is hidden from view.

Inspiration

These beautiful sunflowers are evocative of hot summer days, you can almost feel the heat off the land and imagine the fields of sunflowers in Provence.



16
Cut a narrow strip of conditioned yellow clay rolled out at No4 on the pasta machine, and apply it with TLS to the back of the flower. It should reach from the circles you applied earlier to the edge of the petals. If there are gaps between the petals, apply a small wad of clay to the gap to reinforce them and roll the clay flat with a knitting needle. Tidy the edges with a potters carving tool.

17
Return to the oven once again in the Wilton flower forming cup and cure according to manufacturers instructions for an hour - this will ensure that the petals are strong. Cool, and repeat step 14. Your pendant is now ready to wear.

TOP TIPS

REINFORCEMENTS: The petals need to be reinforced at every opportunity and cannot be too thin or the bead will not be robust enough to wear in a necklace

DAMAGE CONTROL: If at any time the petals tear or are pulled off - start again, do not be tempted to smooth over the break

STRENGTH: The back of the flower needs to be well reinforced - remember it is the back that gets the most wear and tear. Although the flower goes back into the oven more than once, long slow curing ensures the strength of the piece.

HANDLE WITH CARE: Do not handle the flower by it's petals when it is hot - the petals are soft and brittle and will break off. They are robust once they are cool.



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