

TEXAS BLUEBONNET

The Bluebonnet (“*Lupinus texensis*”) is the most popular wildflower in the state of Texas. It blooms in the early spring and can be easily found in fields and along roadsides throughout Texas. It was adopted as the state flower of Texas in 1901.

The gum paste bluebonnet has four components; the central bud, the small petals, the hooded petals and the leaves. Each complete bluebonnet has one central bud (the cone), about five small petals, 8-16 hooded petals (depending on maturity of the bluebonnet) and a grouping of 5 leaves.



MATERIALS AND TOOLS

If you are dealing with Texas humidity then Nick Lodge’s gum paste recipe is by far the sturdiest. The recipe can be found on his website www.nicholaslodge.com. The simplified version of this flower requires only a few tools. You need to have gum paste, sharp, fine point scissors, fingers, wire, a piping tip (any number as long as the other end fits a standard coupler), ball tool, foam, leaf veiner (generic leaf type), tape, water, egg white and a little patience. The recommended wire is 26 gauge paper wrapped for the small and hooded petals, 18 gauge for the central bud and 22 gauge for the leaves. An airbrush is the fastest and easiest method for coloring the components. If you don’t have an airbrush, you can paint the pieces with petal dusts and/or powder colors.

CENTRAL BUD

To make the cone, take a large grape sized ball of gum paste and attach it with a little egg white to a 6 inch length of 18-gauge wire. The shape should be tapered carrot like, coming to a point and about 1 and ½ inches long. Make sure to secure gum paste to wire with fingers. Holding it upside down take your scissors and starting at the base make five incisions to make five petals. Continue to snip the cone between each of the petals of the previous layer. If at the end of the cone you end up with a little piece that doesn’t belong just pull it out. Mark a line with a knife or edge of scissors from tip of each petal to base. Pull out slightly the bottom layer or two of petals. Yee haw.... it is done. Dry this upside down.

SMALL PETALS

Take 26 gauge green wire and cut into segments about 1 1/3" long. Roll out white gum paste quite thin using a rolling pin or if you are one of the lucky ones, a pasta machine. Using the coupler end of your tip as a cutter cut out petals (store under plastic till you are ready to use). Dip the tip of the wire in egg white and fold the round piece around the wire like a taco. The petal should be closed at the base end and more open at the tip end. Squeeze slightly to ensure it is secured and slightly bent at the tip. Hang upside down to dry... You will need about 20 of these for each flower.

HOODED PETALS

These are nothing more than the small petals above with a hood attached (a taco inside of another taco). So cut out more very thin circles using the coupler end of your tip as a cutter. Soften the edges of the circle by pinching with fingers or a ball tool on a foam pad. Using a little water brush a small line at the bottom of the circle. (Egg white will affect coloring in later steps

on this blossom, as color won't stick to dry egg white very well.) Secure the hood onto the taco...I mean small petal... so that the folds line up. Bend the newly attached petal back a bit so that it resembles a bonnet. Pinch slightly with fingers.

LEAVES

Bluebonnet leaves grow in groups of five, hand like. Each leaf is cut thinly with their edges softened with a ball tool. Cut out using a small similar cutter or template as drawn below. Wire each one individually and then tape five together just below base.

COLORING

Bluebonnets can be a variety of blue/purple shades ranging from primary blue to a royal blue/purple combination. Each petal also has a small white spot. The best method for coloring is to make all the parts in white and then use an airbrush for coloring. Airbrush each part separately before assembly.

The cone is airbrushed with a couple of colors. The very tip is left white. The midsection is colored with a bright, new leaf, spring green color (Americolor Electric Green) and the base is colored with a royal blue and purple mixture (Americolor Royal Blue, Violet and Regal Purple).

The hooded and small petals are airbrushed with the blue-purple color. Leave a small white spot on the tip of each petal.

The green for the leaves is Americolor Avocado Green – a light mossy sage green type color. Color variegation in the leaves and even the petals will only add realism to the whole flower.

ASSEMBLY

Assemble after colored and dried. Tape five of the small petals; point up, 1/4 inch below the base of the cone. Tape a hooded petal, hood side up, between each of these petals 1/4 to 1/2 inch below the first row of petals. Continue taping hooded petals below and between the petals above. There should be two or three rows of hooded blossoms. After assembly, steam slightly.