











# Skeleton Leaves

## Materials

-  Goggles
-  Rubber gloves
-  Waxy leaves
-  Water
-  Washing soda (powdered detergent NOT baking soda)
-  Toothbrush
-  Metal pot (not aluminum)
-  Strainer
-  Paper plate or baking sheet
-  Napkins

Students will get a view of the vascular structure of leaves that allow plants to move nutrients through their system.

6th - 8th  
Grade

## Directions

1. Find a variety of leaves that look like they have a wax coating as they will work best.
2. Make sure you are wearing gloves and goggles for all of the next steps.
3. Line the bottom of your pot with two layers of leaves.
4. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of washing soda to the pot
5. Add 4 cups of water to your pot and stir until dissolved
6. Move your pot to the stove and heat until the water boils
7. Once the water is boiling, lower to medium heat for 1.5 - 2 hours
8. Pay attention to the pot over this time and add water if it begins to look too low.
9. Remove from heat and allow to cool.
10. Pour leaves through the strainer and discard the liquid under running water.
11. Lay your leaves in a shallow pool of water on your paper plate or baking sheet
12. Use the toothbrush to scrub away the green (now brown), meaty parts of the leaf. Be very careful in this step as the skeletons that will be left are extremely fragile.
13. Rinse with new water from a cup NOT under the tap as the stream will be too strong.
14. Repeat steps 11 & 12 until the desired results are achieved.
15. Place finished leaves between two napkins with a book or something similar on top for 24 hours. This will allow the leaves to dry without curling up.

**Tip: Working on one leaf at a time will help with keeping the leaves intact. While this takes longer, the results will be greater.**

