

The Sweep-Cut or Free-Hand Carving

The cut that turns nervous chipping into a leaf that won't shatter.



From A Manual of Wood-carving (Leland, 1891) · public domain

"Never just press. Press and sweep."

1

Sketch the leaf

Sketch the leaf, marking out a circle to include the lobes. Keep your gouge scrupulously sharp, and practise the cut on waste wood until you have mastered it.

2

Rough it out

rough out the leaf by cutting round it and clearing away the wood, chipping it away little by little with a flat gouge.

3

Cut a guide notch

Cut a notch halfway between the proposed points of the lobes.

4

Shave the lobes

Shave first from one side, then the other, cutting from the point to the corners, to bring the lobes into shape. Do not simply shove or press the edge as in plain work, or the leaf will probably break, especially if the wood is splitty, uneven, or brittle: press the edge while also giving it a slight lateral motion.

5

Cut notches backwards

Once the leaf is roughed, cut the notches backwards to finish it.

