

The leaves are hanging in the windows, on the wall for all to see.

Of course leaves just don't hang in windows and on walls. They hang from tree branches until they float down to the ground as if dancing to the melody of the breeze that has them swaying to musical notes.

"Here's a pretty red and yellow one," exclaims the seven-year old girl. Her eyes sparkle as she picks up first one than two and "Wow," she yells. "This one is even brighter."

The girl and her brother were on a leaf finding excursion. The idea was to collect as many as they could find with red, yellow, brown designs. "Look for little ones all the way up to huge ones," instructs grandma.

"Hey," says bright eyes. "The ones on all the trees are good ones. Can we pick them off the trees?"

Sometimes it takes years to see color in our surroundings. Many first time quilters learn to see the tones of tree greens only after searching for a particular match to a particular fabric choice.

"Look," she told her husband who was driving the family van on the freeway. "I never noticed the different greens in the trees and the hillsides before now. "Even the yellow has green. Now I see the depth in the hillside."

Color surrounds us. It takes some of us longer in our short lives to see the colors that are typically kept secure in a crayon box. All those sticks standing straight and tall like soldiers in formation can teach us the delight in using more than the black and the white selections.

A pile of leaves is like a strand of crayons in the box. Each has a story to tell if we choose to play with them. Smooth the pile of leaves into a flat surface forming a quilt, interject a patch of green grass they are covering creating a small autumn nature quilt. Take a selection of leaves into the house, design a pattern with a handful onto a 12 by 12 inch piece of wax paper. Place another wax paper piece on top and iron them together. Punch a hole at the top or place tape at the top and adhere to a window. The daylight will focus on the design and create a masterpiece of artwork.

Available leaves, though, are getting more difficult to collect. Trees are settling into the winter mode. Soon the box of crayons will be the "leaves". Just scribble a design on a blank sheet of paper, any color. The large puzzle piece pattern comes to mind. It is like quilting a design securing your quilt top, batting and back together, but only on paper. This is a good way to try a design. Using crayons, color in-between the scribbles. Various colors add depth, give design patterns.

As a child I always used the first letter of my name to begin the design. Little did I know that I was practicing a quilting pattern for my adult artworks before they are hung on walls or draped on beds.

Lana Russ

