

# Tutorial on Leather Lacing on Gourds for a finished edge.

## By Judy Sullins

### Yavapai Gourd Patch

Leather Edge Lacing serves two purposes. It can bind 2 or more pieces of leather together and provides a decorative finish to the work by covering the raw edges.

I decided to try leather lacing on gourds to cover the raw edge of the gourd and give the gourd a quality edge finish. The stitches can be done the same to the last stitch then some changes have to be made. When working on Leather, you usually have at least two pieces of leather and you can hide the ends of the lacing between the pieces. When working with a gourd you only have one layer to work on so the final stitches are a bit tricky. I have learned by trial and error how to do the best job. If you can think of an easier way, by all means use it.

You can obtain leather lacing material from your craft stores or from a leather store like Tandy Leather or The Leather Factory. Leather lacing comes in several types and sizes. Most all of the lace is either 3/32" or 1/8" wide and comes on spools which are 50 yards long. The lace is contoured to make it easier to work with. The lacing is finished on the top and rough on the underneath. You can get lacing that is wider 5/32" and normally is sold on spools of 25 yards. The wider lace is better for what we call buckstitching. This is a flat straight run stitch. I have used this lace on gourds as a whip stitch around the top. It does look nice but is a simple finish. You can also get round leather lacing that is 1mm to 2mm in circumference. I have used this lacing with pine needles to make baskets. The suede lace that is readily available and comes in the right width but it is a thicker lace and does not work well for edge lacing. It can be used for edges using the whip stitch. The suede lace is available in many colors where the edge lace is usually only available is 5 or 6 colors (different shades of brown) plus a natural color. The natural can be dyed or stained to match projects. You can also use vinyl lacing but to me it looks like you are putting plastic on the gourd. I really like the looks of true leather.

What you will need for this project:

1. A gourd that you can make a bowl from. You want to have at least a 6 inch opening for your bowl. It is better to have a fairly thin gourd for this tutorial as I am using the simpler of the lacing procedures here.
2. Leather Lacing either 1/8" or 3/32" wide.
3. A leather lacing needle. (Either a 2 prong lacing needle or a T.lok- eye needle. (I use the 2 prong steel needle)
4. Drill bit either 3/32" or 1/8".
5. Drill  
(Instead of a drill and bit you can use an awl to make your holes but they do have to be uniform in size.)

The first thing that needs to be done is your gourd cleaned on the outside, cut to use as a bowl and cleaned on the inside. I will not go into the particulars of this step as most all gourders know how to clean and cut gourds. The gourd I am using in my sample is about a 6 inch in diameter

bowl. If you want to decorate your bowl now is the time to do it. Also you need to put any finish on the bowl you desire at this time. The lacing is the last item on the bowl.



Now we are ready to get started:

1. It is time to drill holes around the edge of your bowl. A simple rule is: If using 1/8" lace, use a 1/8" drill bit. If using 3/32" inch lace use a 3/32" drill bit. The holes should be the same size as the lace. The holes need to be spaced at 1/8" or 3/32" apart and the same distance from the top of the bowl. The best way to do this is to hold a piece of your lace between each hole before you drill and mark the distance down from the top by measuring.



2. Length of lacing to use. The rule of thumb for this type of lacing which is called "Spanish Edge-Lacing of One Loop" is to use a length of 4 and 1/2 times the length of the edge to be covered. I usually add about 12" to this to be on the safe side as the rule of thumb is for leather not gourds. If your gourd is real thick, it is better to use a double or triple loop Spanish Edge lacing. The gourd I am using is between 1/8" and 1/4" thick.



3. Putting the lace in the needle. I am using the 2-prong lacing needle. It has an opening on the end with one shorter side and a barb to hold the leather lace. This needle holds the lace securely and I have never had any trouble with it. This photo shows the end of the needle opened with a toothpick holding it. Insert the end of the leather lace between the prongs. It does not matter which side of the lace is on the short or long prong of the needle. Use a small pliers to set the barb into the leather. You can now tug on the leather and it should hold tight in the needle.



4. In Spanish edge lacing, as well as other types, it is more convenient to work from left to right. Run the lacing through what we will call the first hole or beginning hole. Go from the outside of the gourd to the inside. Leave a small tail about 1" long. Always have the finished side of the lacing on top.



5. Bring the lacing back to the front and insert the lacing through the same hole, beneath the projected end and draw it fairly tight. This stitch will have to be removed when you get to the last stitch.. This will hold the stitch until you need to undo it.



6. Bring the lacing to the front again, and go through hole 2. Pull this stitch fairly tight keeping the finished side of the lacing on top.
7. Bring your lacing to the front, only this time go through the loop you just created. It may be necessary to straighten out the lacing from time to time as it does get twisted. Just let the needle hang freely and run your thumb and finger down the lacing..
8. Bring your lacing to the front again and go through hole 3.



9. Bring your lacing to the front and go through the loop you just created again.



10. Repeat these two steps until you get to the last hole. Finish this hole half way by completing step eight. Do not go through the loop in step nine yet.



11. Pull out the first stitch you made, being extra careful not to break the top of the whole out. (I have done this and it is a bear to glue back in.)

12. Bring your lacing to the front and go through the last loop you created as in step 9. Put the tail end of the first stitch you removed through the back of the stitch you are doing.

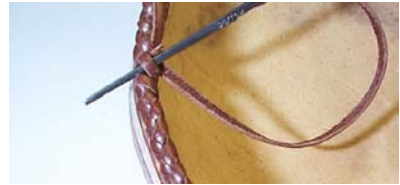


13. Put a drop of glue on this spot to hold the tail tight. Then pull the lacing tight. Use scissors to cut the tail end off.



14. Bring your needle and leather lacing to the front and stitch from front to back through the hole that was the original first stitch hole.

15. Bring your lacing to the front and stitch through the loop you just made. Now all of the holes should be completed and your pattern should match all the way around your gourd.
16. The last stitches !!!! Bring your needle from back to front through the top loop on the next stitch. Then bring the needle down and through the hole directly below this loop. Put a dab of glue on this before you pull the stitch tight. Now pull the stitch tight and cut off the end as close as you can.



Congratulations !! You have just completed your first leather laced rim.

Gourds that I have done leather lacing on.

