



<http://www.spookyblue.com/halloween/giant-jackolantern/>

How to build giant paper mache pumpkins

The Moth Brothers



Remember Spot, the dragon who lived under the steps on the Munsters? You know that Eddie had cleanup duty every day after school, right? Marilyn sure as hell wasn't going to do it. And where do you think all that dragon poo ended up? Not neatly packed into sacks and left on the curb, I can tell you, but instead piled up in the back of the garden under an old tarp. Nobody ever went back there, and besides, it didn't smell any worse than the rest of Lily's compost heap.

At some point, a set of incidental events involving said compost heap, a pair of seeds from a rotting pumpkin, a squirrel, and let's say... a talking alligator all combined in such a way as to produce the Moth Brothers.

These demented denizens of the pumpkin patch, twin blotches of vegetable nightmare, are so terrible, so unpleasant, so utterly corrupt that zombies avoid them for fear of being eaten. They're twin traumas with orange eyes and saw blade teeth. Smash a pumpkin in their neighborhood and there won't be anything left of the vandal for the police to identify. No witnesses, either. Just a slither, "snap!" and "crunch, crunch, crunch!"

But don't they look cool? Want to make some of your own?

Obtained from
Omarshauntedtrail.com

Materials list



- Newspaper, paper towels, Elmer's glue, Duct tape

It's funny how the list of stuff to make these things every year keeps getting smaller and smaller. Back to basics, I guess.

- Pumpkin-shaped armature
Big outdoor pumpkin lamp, or a plastic cauldron. More about this in a minute.
- Paint
Latex or acrylic, you really can't go wrong. I even splurged and spent \$3.00 on day-glo orange spray paint for the interior.
- Weatherproofing/sealer

Your pumpkin monsters will melt in the rain or in heavy dew if they are not well sealed. Trust me.

Let's get started



These old, giant pumpkin lamps are cool. The *old* ones are. To qualify as cool, it has to have triangle eyes and nose, and a toothy grin. And it's going to make a really good armature for our first giant pumpkin. Of course if yours isn't the cool variety, that's fine. Nobody will ever know.

We're doing plain old traditional paper mache work here, but with a couple of twists to help things go smoother and to keep from damaging your armature. You can use anything that's pumpkin shaped. These lamps are fairly easy to come by, and they're already the right size (about 3' tall).

Alternatively, you could build a shape out of poultry screen or even a big blob of balloons all wrapped up in plastic wrap. How you're going to cover a writhing mass of balloons with paper mache, though, is anyone's guess. Heh...maybe you could make a giant bunch of evil grapes or something.



"That grinning glowing globular invader of your living room is an inhabitant of the punkin patch, and if your doorbell rings and nobody's there, that was no Martian. It's Halloween." ~ [Orson Welles](#)

Step 1 is to cover your armature with something that you can easily peel off later. I've had luck with both plastic wrap and aluminum foil, so try one. If you don't like it, switch to the other. Don't use a lot of tape.

Remember, we're covering the object so when it comes time to remove the actual paper mache, it comes right off the armature without any fuss. If you apply paper directly to your armature, it will stick like

no glue has ever stuck before, and you'll swear to gawd that you're never ever going to do another one of these stupid Spooky Blue Halloween projects again.



After your pumpkin is safely cocooned, start ripping your newspaper to shreds of different lengths no longer than about 10". Anything longer tends to be difficult to cover in glue without getting it all over.

Then you end up with bugs glued to your hair, cats stuck to your legs, all kinds of problems. Make your strips about 2" wide, and don't use scissors. Tear them manually, avoid glossy paper, and use plain old newspaper.

In a large bowl, mix three parts Elmer's glue to one part water. For a single session of paper mache work, I generally use about one cup of glue for my mixture (So, that would be 1cup glue, 1/3cup H2O).

Dip three fingers into the glue and apply to both sides of a strip. The exact right amount you'll have to figure out on your own. Too much glue and it won't stick to the armature. Too little glue and you'll have trouble smoothing out the wrinkles. By the way, I wear thin latex gloves during all this.

Draw an imaginary line down the center of the pumpkin to divide it into two hemispheres. When you apply paper, don't let the edges of the hemispheres touch. Just build them up individually and leave a



small gap between them. By doing this, we avoid having to use a knife or razor to cut the paper away from the armature. This will spare your plastic pumpkin some nasty scarring.

Don't be discouraged if your first layer causes you some trouble. The plastic or aluminum foil will probably move around a lot and cause wrinkles. That's okay. Just get the first layer down as best you can and let it dry. Don't even worry about smoothing it out. All the layers after that will be much easier.

You'll need to apply at least 7 layers of newspaper in order to achieve enough rigidity for the de-molded pumpkin to stand up on its own. Alternate colors for each layer so you're sure to get good coverage. I used yellow pages from a phone book or sale ads from the newspaper alternated with black and white newsprint. Cover all the way from the base of the stalk to almost the very bottom. Leave a big enough area at the bottom so that you can do some internal work later on.



Let each layer dry completely before applying the next layer. It took me about a week working an hour each night to build up enough layers before I could remove the paper from the armature. If you want your pumpkin to be super strong, then just keep adding layers until you're finally tired of playing in glue.

If your hemispheres don't overlap, you should be able to pull them away from the pumpkin with very little effort. It's okay if they became a little deformed and don't match up all that well. Just tape them together from the inside with duct tape as best you can. At this stage, lying on its side, it should sort of look like a mutant walnut.



Weld the two pieces together by applying several strips of newspaper to the seams. Be patient and cover the seam completely. Leave a hole at the top for the stalk. After it is strong enough to stand on its own, add some extra bulk around the larger hole on his bottom. I'll let that imagery sink in so you can make your own jokes.



Now we have an egg. Using a Dremel or a razor blade, carefully cut out your jack o' lantern's features.

Remember that this thing is really big, so don't carve out a tiny little face. Use up some of this real estate you've created. When you cut out his mouth, the toothier and more jagged the better. Keep a good 6" to 10" gap in between the bottom of your gourd and your gourd's mouth. This should help to keep it from collapsing.

I never really experimented with a gaping wide mouth for these guys, so feel free to try one yourself. Just keep in mind that if you cut a big hole in the middle of his face, the weight of it is going to push down on that hole. This could cause it to collapse.



Now we have bad egg. Mean, but still an egg. Let's add a stalk. Roll up your choice of either newspaper or brown paper towel and wrap tightly in duct tape.

Insert several inches of stalk into the hole at the top of his head and secure it with duct tape on both sides. For added strength, place a good layer or paper strips on the inside to help hold things in place. Add more paper to form ridges and to camouflage your welding job.

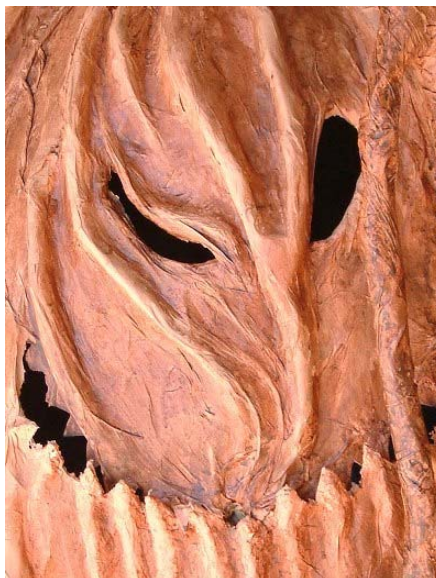


We've been talking a lot about paper mache when we've really been applying paper strips. Real paper mache is mashed up paper pulp. I like a brand called Claycrete.



When mixed correctly with a little water, you can mold this stuff like clay, and it dries extremely hard.

Mix small batches according to package instructions. For building up pumpkiny features, I put about 1.5 cups of pulp in a container, then sprinkle a little (very little) water over it. Don't squeeze it. Just push it around, flip it, let the water soak in. Keep adding water until you have what looks like some seriously dry and lumpy mashed potatoes.



Press the pulp onto your pumpkin to create lumps, boils, ridges, eyebrows, teeth. Grrrr.

Go back over your pumpkin with a "skin" layer as if you were corpsing him. For this I like using plain brown paper towel and Elmer's glue. Same solution as what I use to do the paper mache work.

After you're happy with your monster's details, it's time to give him a good paint job.

I used acrylic paints on Fred here. Start with dark colors and work your way up. Browns, oranges, yellows. Dry-brush highlights with the lightest paints.



Put on a good coat of sealer inside and out. As an added feature, spray paint florescent orange or yellow inside your pumpkin. Then place him outside over a worklight or a flashlight. The florescent orange glows like neon and adds to the glowing effect.

Fred was fun, but just one Moth Brother is like just one Reese cup. You want another. Meet Bob...

Bob



Talk about getting back to your roots. Bob gets his pumpkiny shape from a plastic cauldron, just like our first real scarecrow [Bruno](#).

It's the same drill as with Fred.

Cover your cauldron (or whatever it is you're using...beach ball, cactus, whatever) with plastic wrap or aluminum foil, divide into two hemispheres, and cover with no less than 7 layers of newspaper strips.

Peel away the two sides, tape them together with duct tape, then weld it all into one shape with more newspaper strips inside and out.

Cut out some evil eyes and a cruel mouth, then add a stalk made from rolled up and duct-taped newspaper rolls.

Duct tape to the top and interior of your pumpkin, then add other newspaper & duct tape features to help blend the stalk into the top of his "head".

Cement in place with lots of paper mache strips inside and out.

He sort of looks like a shark in a pumpkiny kind of way





Notice the extra rolled up paper towel braided around the stalk and embracing the top of Bob's head. This will help prevent "flat head syndrome" as well as lend more interesting features to the stalk.

Obtained from
Omarshantedtrail.com



More paper towel ropes taped all over are a quick way to add pumpkin ridges. After adding my skin layer of paper towel, I noticed that Bob really could have used a few more ridges. But by this time we were getting too close to opening night, so I just kept going.



Brown paper towel on a roll makes excellent corpsing material and outstanding pumpkin skin. You can smooth it down or wrinkle it up nicely, it's strong, and if you're pressed for time you might not even feel the need to paint it.



You can get rolls of this stuff at any cleaning supply store. You might even find it at your local home improvement center.



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Bob turns rabid as a skunk.



No, wait. This is Bob getting some paper mache pulp teeth. There wasn't really anything wrong with him the way he was, but the paper mache pulp adds a little more depth.



Bulging teeth are just the beginning. He got warts, mold, um...scurvy, all kinds of stuff.



Bob's final paint job is just a variation on Fred's. I started with dark colors and worked up to the lighter highlights across his ridges and teeth. These highlights can really make things like boney teeth stand out.

Use a sponge or medium-size brush to apply color, then dab with a paper towel to blend. Browns are a great place to start. Then blend in lots of orange and finally yellow. If you want your pumpkin to be a little brighter, that's fine. Just mix your paints until you get the color you want.

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Omarshantedtrail.com

Pics



The Moth Brothers were a fun project, and I can see the makings of a mutant pumpkin patch in the coming years. It may take me that long to come up with a way to properly seal these guys so future generations don't get saturated with rain like these guys did.



The water damage was minimal, but it was enough to distort Fred's (the tall one) shape so that he falls over now without a stake or stand to hold him up. A little reshaping will fix this.



Or maybe I'll have an auction to raise glue money for next year. Hmm..

Anyway, giant sharky jackolanterns make great props. They're easy to build if a little time consuming, but what could be easier? Start in November and you could fill your whole front yard with these gruesome gourds by the following Halloween. Have fun!

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