

Life sized Spiny Aloe Vera Succulent Sculpture in Crochet

By Sharlene



Introduction

I am a crazy plant lady!

When I am not actually gardening, or reading about gardening, or planning new garden beds, or shopping for gardening supplies, I have also managed to learn how to crochet – basically so that I can make more plants out of crochet!

This pattern is to create a life-sized spiny aloe type succulent. Working onto a wire can be tricky but the actual stitches are simple and once mastered you can play with the size and type of aloe you make.



Yarn requirements

I live in Australia and access local craft stores, Spotlight and Lincraft for yarn, along with charity shops passing along pre-loved craft materials. I use a wide variety of yarns almost all being acrylic and mostly in 8 ply for my patterns. The most important characteristics are colour and look of the yarn to the finished plant. I have only worked the pattern in acrylic yarn, but I feel confident it will turn out well in any yarn you choose.

Materials required

- 6mm and crochet hook. I use Clover Hooks but this is a personal preference. I use them because they tend to stop the yarn splitting and allow you to work faster.
- Yarn in your choice of colours. For the variegated version I used 2 balls of Naturals mix Lincraft DK Double Knitting yarn, and 2 of Fawn from Spotlight's 4 Seasons 8 ply 100% acrylic range. For the all green version, I used 2 balls of Apple from Lincraft in DK Double Knitting yarn. The 2 balls of yarn used in each version are so I could work leaves from 2 separate balls. All the yarn was not used in this project.
- Darning needles for sewing in ends
- 2 pairs of scissors – a pair for yarn work and a specific pair for cutting duck tape (and do not mix the two)
- Stitch markers in a variety of colours and sizes
- Duck Tape. I use the genuine brand because it is more reliable.
- Wire from a roll 1mm in thickness
- Plant pot of size to suit the project. My pots were about 10cm tall and 10-12cm diameter
- Decorative stones to top the pot.
- Felt in a shade to work with your project as supporting "soil"
- Rotary cutter for felt (optional but helps cut felt evenly) and mat
- Pliers with a built in wire cutter
- Tape measure
- Rubber band

Finished size

Life sized to suit the pot used. My versions measure around 75cm across and about 25cm tall
Tension not important

Abbreviations (US terms)

CH = chain

SC = single crochet

DC = double crochet

HDC = half double crochet

SS = slip stitch

SM = stitch marker

TSC = Twisted single crochet. I use this as an alternative to crab or reverse single crochet because it can be worked forward.

Recipe (Instructions)

General

This set of instructions should really be seen as a guide or recipe rather than an exact number of stitches. The reason is that each wire length cut can have differences, each person will put a different number of stitches onto the wire to cover it, and in each specific leaf there is required slight variations in the rows. Plus for each plant you will make multiple leaves. I provide guides to my number of stitches.

For my variegated form, I created a total of 5 leaves, while for my single colour form I created a total of 7 leaves, each ranging in size from about 18cm to 50cm in length.

Each aloe leaf is worked in 2 strands of 8 ply with a 6mm hook over a folded length of wire which acts as a spine. Then additional rows of stitches are worked onto the back of each chain along the spine. The

outer of these rows includes twisted single crochet stitches to form the spines. After creating all the leaves, the finished leaves are gathered into a bouquet shape and tied together at their bases. A sausage of felt is formed around the tied base of the leaves until it is tight enough to fill the plant pot. The felt is then inserted and finally the pots are topped with stones to create the finished plant.

Creating the wire spines of the leaves

To create the wire spine measure and cut a length of 1mm wire from roll, using pliers, double the finished length of each leaf. The wire length should include a portion of length to be buried in your chosen pot. My lengths each included an extra 16cm which when folded becomes 8cm buried into the pot.



After cutting, use the pliers to fold the wire in half in the middle and press the strands together but leave an 'eye' at the top to feed yarn through (see below photo). Fold over a small end in each length (about 1-2cm) and again make at least one 'eye'. The end result is an eye at the top and bottom of the wire.



For the all green version I cut 7 lengths of wire: 100cm, 90cm, 80cm, 65cm, 55cm, 40cm, and 35cm. Each wire is folded in half (50cm, 45cm, 40cm, 32cm, 27cm, 20cm, 17cm)

To bind the folded wires, cut 4 to 5 sections of Duck Tape the width of the roll and about 1-1.5cm wide using the scissors for this purpose. Note that scissors can become sticky over time and I use medical alcohol or methylated spirits to wipe clean the blades occasionally.

Wrap the folded wire in 4 to 5 areas along length (at least one at each end) working the tape at an angle onto the wire. Try to keep the tape as spread out and flat as possible to limit bumps.

Note: do not twist the wires as this forms springs.

Crocheting the spine

Once the wire spine is created you can begin crochet. Using 2 strands of your chosen 8 ply colour with a 6mm hook, make a slip knot leaving a tail of around 15cm and chain onto the wire starting at the base which will be the end with the two lengths of wire not the folded end. Working onto a wire requires practice but is worth it.



After about 10 chains onto the wire, stop and secure the yarn ends through the eye at the base but do not trim. The excess yarn will be used to disguise the eye. After securing the end, you can now push the chains down the wire to hide the wire. Continue to work chains along the length of wire until you reach the other end eye. Tip: The more stitches added to the wire, the more it is disguised but also the tighter the chains will be to work through. Try to reach a nice balance between wire coverage and too many stitches.

Cut off a long 15cm tail of yarn and feed the yarn ends firstly through the wire and then through the final chain and pull up. The excess yarn can again be used to disguise the eye. Do not trim ends yet. They will be used later.



The rest of the leaf is worked in 2 rows built onto each side of the chain. The actual stitch count is not given but rather the order of the stitches. I find the best way to divide up the stitch types onto the spine is to use stitch markers to show the start of each section in each row. Take a look at the photo as an example of stitch marker placement up and down each side of the spine.

The idea is to get a natural layout of a leaf. For an aloe leaf, the leaf is quite broad and thick much of the length before tapering up to a point. I stitched the leaf spine all the way to the base even though some of the leaf will be “buried” in felt and stones in the pot. Because the aloe plant with all “grow” from a central point, you can start crocheting row 1 at a point above the spine base. In my case, I used a stitch marker to mark 8cm from the base of the leaf to commence row 2 (the yellow SM above). This is 2cm below the height of my pot. Note: I am left-handed so all of my photos reflect this. You can use a mirror to flip the images if needed.

Row 1:

Using 2 strands of the same colour as the spine, yarn onto the spine chain just above your stitch marker and 2 CH. Work the remaining stitches along the spine in the back half of the chain only in the following order: DC, HDC, SC. At the top chain of the spine add a chain and then continue down the other side of the leaf in reverse order. For one of my leaves, I commenced DC above the yellow stitch marker. I worked 1DC in each stitch until I reached the blue SM and changed to HDC. I worked 1HDC into each

stitch until I reached the orange SM and then changed to 1SC in each stitch to the top of the leaf. I worked a chain at the top and then worked the stitches in reverse order down the other side of the leaf. At the yellow SM, slip stitch across to the other side of the leaf again and commence row 2.

Row 2:

Work SS in first 3 stitches, then 1 TSC into next stitch. Repeat this pattern up the leaf length. Adjust the number of SS towards to top so that you end on a TSC at the turning chain. Reverse the pattern down the other side of the leaf. Fasten off yarn and secure ends.

Repeat this pattern for all leaves required. I worked a total of 7 leaves. Odd numbers of leaves seem to look best.

For the variegated version I used 2 strands of one colour for the spine and row 1, then I changed to the second colour to create row 2.

“Potting Up” your work

All the leaves of the aloe form from a common center. To create this effect, gather your completed leaves and hold them bouquet style on the base of each leaf. Shorter leaves are in the middle and longer leaves are on the outside. Once you are happy with the way the leaves look in the bouquet use a rubber band to temporarily hold the bouquet together.

Cut a length of matching yarn and wrap this around all the leaves at the base up and down the “handle” section and secure. Remove the rubber band.



To create a stable base within the pot to display the aloe, I used lengths of felt cut to a height about 2 cm shorter than the pot and rolled them into a fat sausage around the handle of the leaf bouquet. The finished sausage of leaves and felt fitted snugly into the pot. I then topped off the felt “soil” with decorative stones. Because nothing is affixed permanently, I can change the look of the plant over time but if you want, you could glue or stitch the leaves to the felt and then glue the felt sausage into the pot. And finally, arrange the aloe leaves and enjoy your new low maintenance plant!

