

Tinkering with Tyvek

Demo by Sherida Warner, Sept. 17, 2026, for the Art Quilt Association

What is Tyvek and how can you incorporate it into your art projects?

Tyvek is a synthetic flash-spun, high-density polyethylene fiber patented by the DuPont Chemical Co. It looks and feels more like paper and is produced for three uses:

1. Shipping and mailing envelopes, which are white for priority mail.
2. House construction.
3. Safety gear, such as disposable protective suits.

However, artists have discovered that Tyvek can be manipulated by cutting, ironing, painting and sewing it. Tyvek can be melted into unique and organic shapes that can become part of an art quilt.

How to manipulate Tyvek: First cut up pieces that are easy to handle and paint with acrylic or watercolor. Let dry completely. Next, heat with an iron or a heat gun. Make sure your area is ventilated by a fan or open window or work outdoors because of fumes.

Use your iron on hottest setting, placing Tyvek between two sheets of parchment paper. It magically shrinks into different shapes, and bubbles appear on the backside of it. More heat will melt holes and give you a lacey effect. Experiment and see what you prefer.

Your finished pieces can be stitched into other materials, such as organza; cut into various shapes and glued to other materials for mixed media; embroidered; formed into medallions; layered into flower shapes; and they can be enhanced with beads.

Many online tutorials are available. On YouTube, Playing With Tyvek by Sandra Duran Wilson, shows how to achieve bubbles and she says a heat gun makes bigger ones than an iron, if that's what you prefer. Others focus on flowers, jewelry, decorative boxes, etc.

The Winter 2026 edition of Art Quilting Studio magazine features a cover photo and article on learning to stitch and paint Tyvek by Laretta Crites of (laurettacrites.com). She shows several examples of koi fish. She doesn't iron the Tyvek, as she doesn't like the random results. If you are interested in her technique, sign up for her video on her website at laurettacrites.com/koi and she will send you a copy of her template as well.

Other sources for Tyvek: a 50-sheet pack for about \$23 on Amazon or 20 sheets for \$11 on Etsy.