

# BELMEADE SIGNS

CUSTOM SIGN MAKERS  
& DESIGNERS



## GOLD LEAF AND CUSTOM SIGNS

Over the years, our shop has been fortunate to be known for its [gold leafed custom sign](#). Many times, we have been asked what are the differences between gold leaf and gold paint, how long do they last, how expensive is it, is there a noticeable difference between the two? All are definitely valid questions when one is not familiar with the finishes.



One thing we have noticed is a resurgence of gold leaf requests on our custom carved signs. Just like any trends in arts, fashion or music, the same holds true to finishes on signs. So, what does [gold leaf](#) look like before it is

applied to lettering? Well the picture above shows it in a booklet form. It is a very thin sheet of gold that is kept together by non-stick protective paper. The sheets can come in a loose or pattern form (tacked to a backing paper). The process of gold leafing consists of applying an adhesive called size, letting it cure to the proper tackiness and then applying the leaf onto the size. The size application is a crucial step that will in the end render a beautifully even gold surface without holes or blotchy spots. It does take years of practice to get it just right. Here at [Belmeade Signs](#), we do not favor the highly polished reflection that gold can create when applied to an extra smooth substrate. The simple reason is that, as you might have already noticed during sunny days, a highly reflective gold leaf lettering will blind your vision when the light hits the sign at some time of day. Basically, that means the very function of a sign which is to convey and

announce a message will not be fulfilled at all from an overdone shine of gold. It can also become of a danger for drivers if the surface of gold is larger as it will act as a mirror beaming sunlight right into the vehicle.

Now what makes gold leaf an excellent finish is its unique glow and colors which all depend upon the grade of gold used. Our shop only uses 23 karats. We have found that lower grades look more like brass and do not yield a genuine beautiful rich gold finish. Same difference between free range and cage raised chicken eggs in the way their yoke look, one is pale while the other has that deep yellow glow. Another point for gold leaf is its longevity. Since it is a metal that has the property of not oxidizing, it is easy to understand, assuming the size holding it has been properly applied, that gold leaf will outlast the sign material itself. What about the appearance difference between gold leaf and gold paint? Well gold paint is made of powdered metals mainly brass and copper



and also binders to keep them together, so as mentioned earlier, the paint will not have as much brilliance and sheen and because it is not a solid material, it will have a life span of only 4 to 8 years

depending upon brand and environmental conditions.

To conclude with the eternal question of cost, yes, gold leaf will cost more. As described above, there are steps and skills required to apply gold leaf properly. Then add the value of the gold along with its market fluctuations and you'll understand why it is a more expensive and valuable finish. Not everyone can afford it and just like anything else in life, get the best your budget allows.