

# PaintShop Tutorials

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## Channels, Alpha Channels and Selections

PSPX<sub>2</sub> and PSPX<sub>3</sub>

Level : Beginner/Intermediate

Materials Required: Images - Images to download from [here](#)

Areas Covered: Channels, Alpha Channels, Selections, Masks, Layers,

Creating, saving and applying Alpha Channels can be a little confusing for PSP users. First we need to establish what Channels and Alpha Channels are and why use them? What is a Channel? Looking at an image you will see a combination of colours, but the image is only made from three colours, Red, Green and Blue.

On the Menu bar open Image go down to Split Channel and a small fly-out box opens with RGB, HSL, CMYK.

RGB = Red, Green and Blue channels

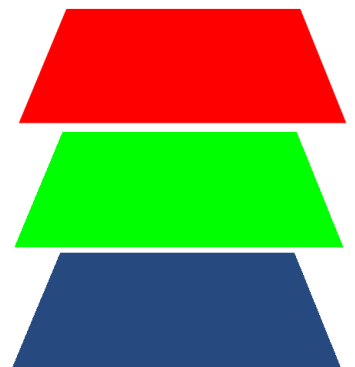
HSL = Hue, Saturation and Lightness

CMYK = Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black.

As we mostly work with RGB or HSL in our graphics, we will use

RGB for this tutorial.

Think of the channels as three colours sandwiched together.



*Red+Green+Blue = White!*

*100% of each colour produces **white**! On paper, this works in reverse. However we do not need all that information to use Channels for graphics work. We just need to know that they combine to make white for RGB images. Otherwise, channels will not make sense. If Channels have always seemed to be backwards, you now have your answer.*

*(courtesy About.com Graphicssoft by Wendy Peck)*

Try it out as an experiment. Open an image (any will do) go to Adjust, Hue and Saturation, Hue/Saturation/Lightness and move each of the sliders to 100, all you are left with is a blank, white image.

When the channels are split from the image, PSP makes three new images leaving the original intact. Three images are not exactly red, green and blue, but varying shades of grey. The layer states what colour the channel is.

Open the image in PSP I have provided one in the zip file that can be downloaded above. Windows, Duplicate then delete the original. You will now have an image as Raster1. On the Menu bar, open Image, Split Channel.

If you set the layers to view as tabbed documents (Menu bar, Window, Tabbed Documents), the original image shows on the far left and the next three are the channels. Tabbed documents are easy to click from one image to another.



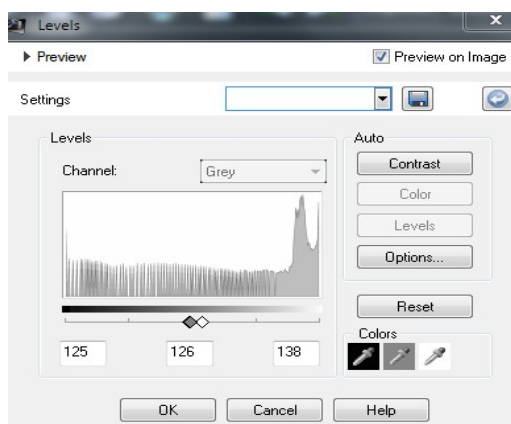
Another good attribute of using Channels is, poor photographs can be enhanced far better by using Channels. In order to see the effects of the settings you make to each Channel, you need to, Combine Channel from the drop-down Menu of Image. Of course, this takes lots of practise to achieve good results.

Now that we have these three channels, what can we do with them. I'm not really into photography as such, but I would imagine photographers 'fixing' their images this way. The only thing I can suggest is to experiment and see what result you get by applying different effects and settings to each channel.

To combine the channels, open Image again and select Combine channels. I have not really ever received terribly good results, so prefer the splitting of channels to the techniques below.

There is quite an indepth study of Channels for PaintShop Pro by Wendy Peck and Sue Chastain on Graphicssoft, About.com click [here](#). However, there are a few little differences due to the tutorial being written for older versions of PSP. With the tutorial open, have this open too so you can get the information regarding differences.

### [Removing the Background using Channels](#)



It is a bit difficult to obtain the total white with black planes. To access the Highlight/Midtone/Shadow in PSPX2/3 click on Adjust, Brightness and contrast, Highlight/Midtone/Shadow. Move each slider to 100 on Relative adjustment method. Absolute does not work effectively at all. The background is still grey and the vapour trail white and visible. After applying HMS, I tried Levels, this worked very well. No vapour trails and only black planes, although little flecks of white in them.

The only way I could get my planes black was to use the magic wand, tapping in the white area, going to selections, invert then with the flood fill with black by tapping the planes. Ctrl D to deselect and the planes look perfectly black. Even a few dabs of black paint with a small brush tip helps too. A bit long winded I know.



### [PaintShop Pro Channel Mask](#)



(courtesy Graphicsoft. About.com, Sue Chastain)



Result of my image

I quite enjoyed this tutorial and found it relatively easy to follow. Again, as stated above, there are changes from the earlier versions to PSP to X2/X3. A little searching on the Menu bar you will soon find the tools and settings needed.

## PaintShop Pro Smart Edge Lasso Tool



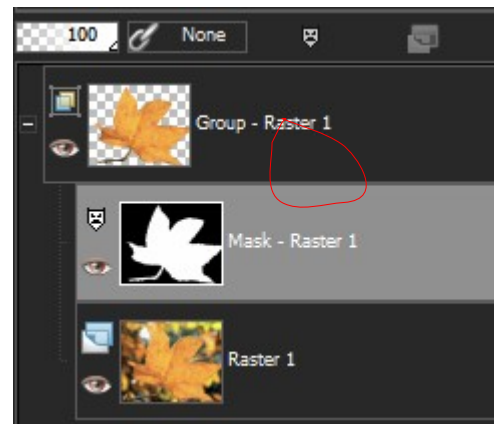
Again, this tutorial was written for much earlier versions of PaintShop Pro, I will update the information for current versions of PSP X2/X3.

(image and information courtesy Sue Chastain of About.com, Graphicssoft)

As per the tutorial, use the Smart Edge Lasso Tool going around the whole leaf. As Sue says, don't worry if there are bits of the background stuck to the leaf, this will be removed later.

With the Selection around the leaf highlighted, go to the Layers palette, click open the drop-down menu Layers and select New Layer Mask, Show Selection.

The leaf will now be on a transparent background. Look at the Layers palette. Raster 1 which is the original image, the Mask – Raster 1 is in the centre and Group – Raster 1 at the top.

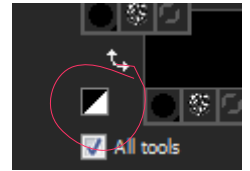


Click on the eye in the Mask layer then the Mask icon at the top. The image is now showing with a reddish orange background.



To remove the parts of the Selection that are showing bits of the background, let's paint them out. Select the Paintbrush, Preset, square 5, even lower the size for some areas.

In the Materials palette, make the foreground white and background black. An easy way of doing this is to click the small black/white icon

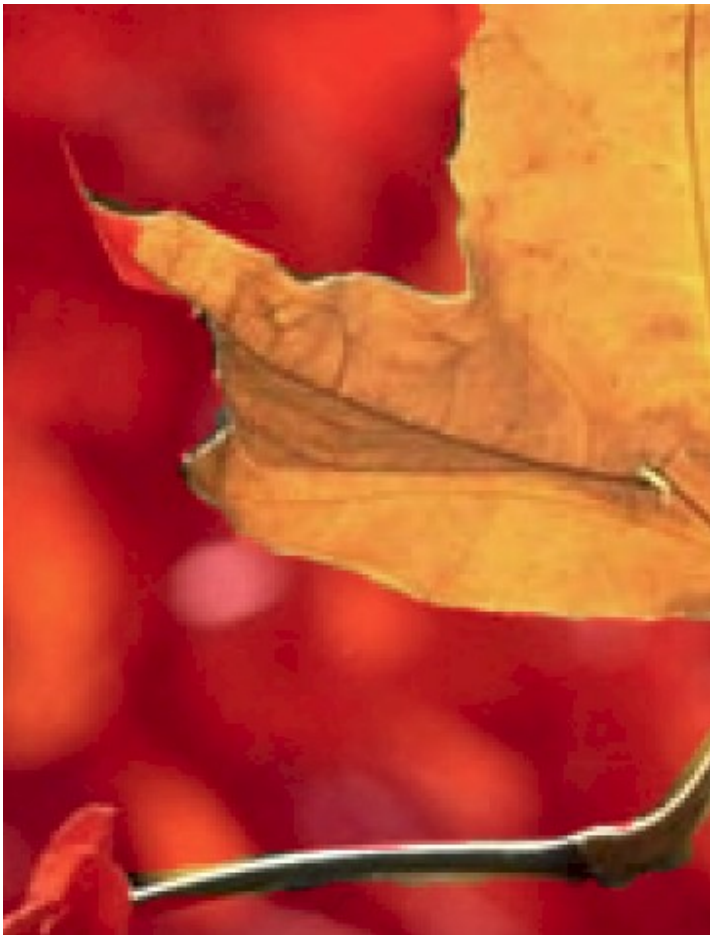


White erases, Black reveals. You will alternate between white and black erasing and revealing the leaf, thereby tidying the image.

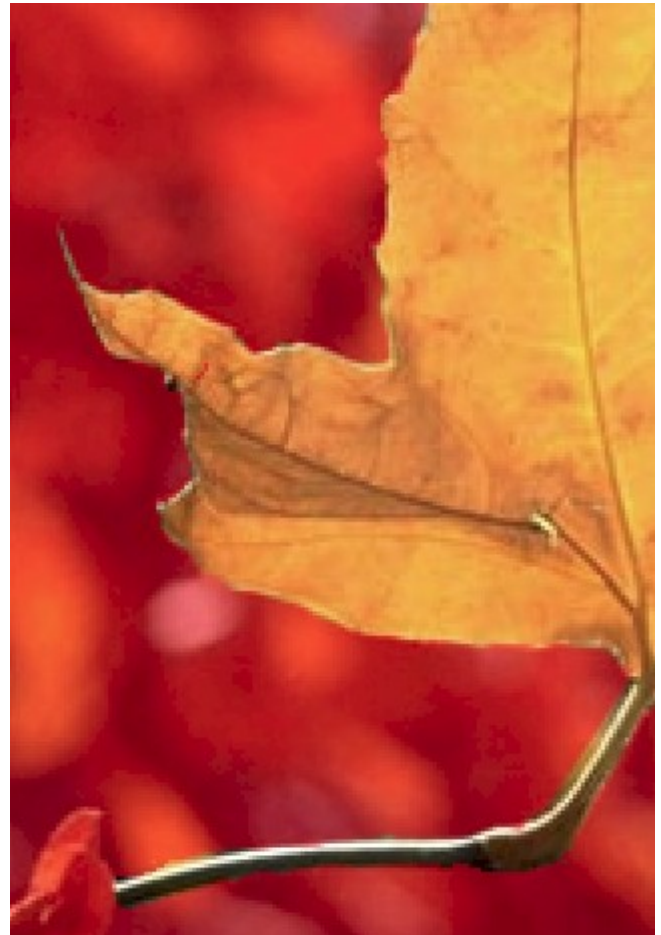
Now the Mask needs to be embedded so go to Selections, From Mask, then right click and delete. When the dialogue box opens click Yes.

**Now SAVE the whole image as a PSP.Image.**

New Mask Layer, From the Image and give the leaf a name. Save the leaf as an Alpha Channel also.



Before



After

Your leaf should now look like this and can also be added as a tube. If you open the PSP.Image that is saved into PSP it will have retained the Alpha Channel. If you do not save as a PSP.Image, then everything will be lost. However, if you saved it as a Mask, then the Mask will be available, but not with the data that is contained within an Alpha Channel.



What is an Alpha Channel? An Alpha Channel is a place where you store and retrieve selection marquee or non-visible picture elements. When an image is stored as an Alpha Channel, **all** the vital items belonging to that image, selections, masks etc. are stored with the image you save. Once you save a selection marquee as an Alpha Channel it is permanently embedded into the image, **BUT**, in order for all the data to be saved and reused, the whole image **MUST be saved as a PSP native format, ie: PSP.Image**. When you re-open that image you will see that all the information that was stored is now visible again in the Alpha Channel should you wish to edit.

You may have an image that you would like to remove certain parts of it. To do this you would apply Channel masking. You can also apply other images thereby creating an artistic composite image, reminiscent of collage or montage.

Alpha channels can be created, saved and even passed on for to other users. There are quite a number of tutorials for PSP that provide materials as Alpha Channels.

The downside of PSP is that it does not have a channel palette, unlike PhotoShop.

Open the image provided in PSP. Using the magic wand with the following settings:  
Mode, replace,  
RGB Value  
Tolerance 15  
Use all layers unticked  
Contiguous ticked  
Anti Alias ticked  
Outside selected.

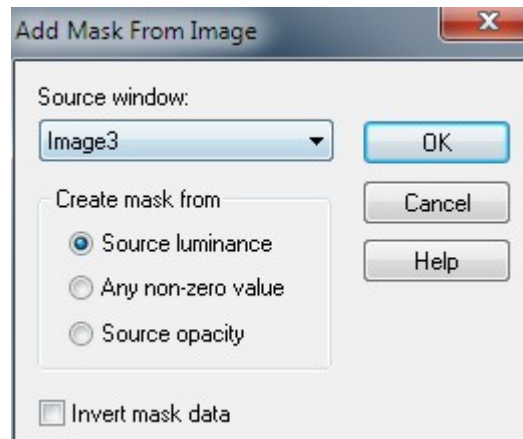
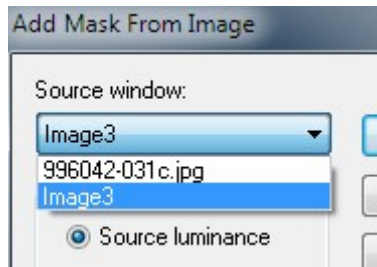
Tap the white areas, hold the shift key down to select other areas between stems. The whole flower should now show as a selection with dancing dots all around it.



Go to Selections and choose Invert. Edit, Copy, Edit, Paste as a New Image. Ctrl.D to deslect.

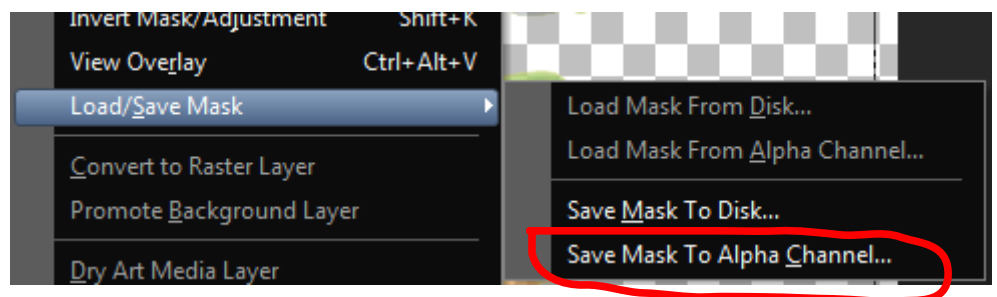
The image will now have a transparent background. You can save this image as a PSP.Image/PNG or make a tube from it for later use.

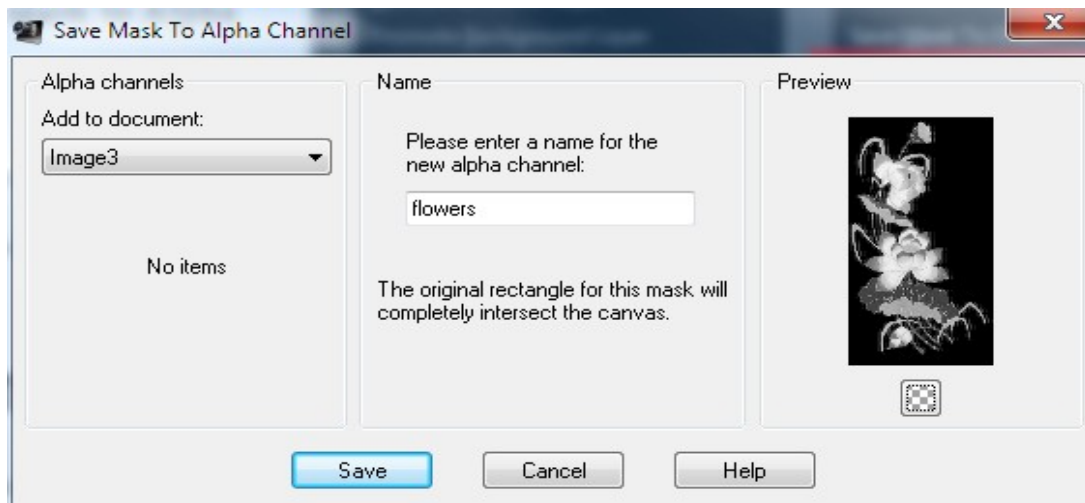
Go to the layers palette, open New Layer Mask, From Image. The transparent background image was automatically named as Image3, if you click the arrow it will show the name of the original image. Make sure it is the transparent image you make the mask from.



Now you have an opaque image and in the layers palette three layers, the middle one being the mask layer.

Highlight the Mask Layer.  
Go to Layers on the Menu bar, select Load/Save Mask and Save Mask to Alpha Channel





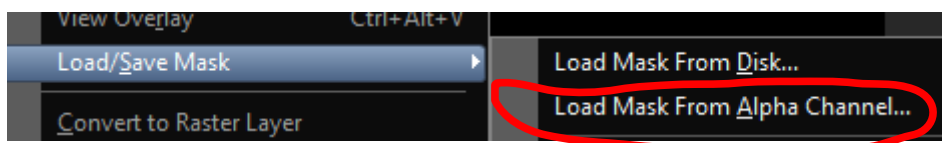
Name the channel and click Save.

We are now going to utilise the the Mask channel in a couple of different ways.

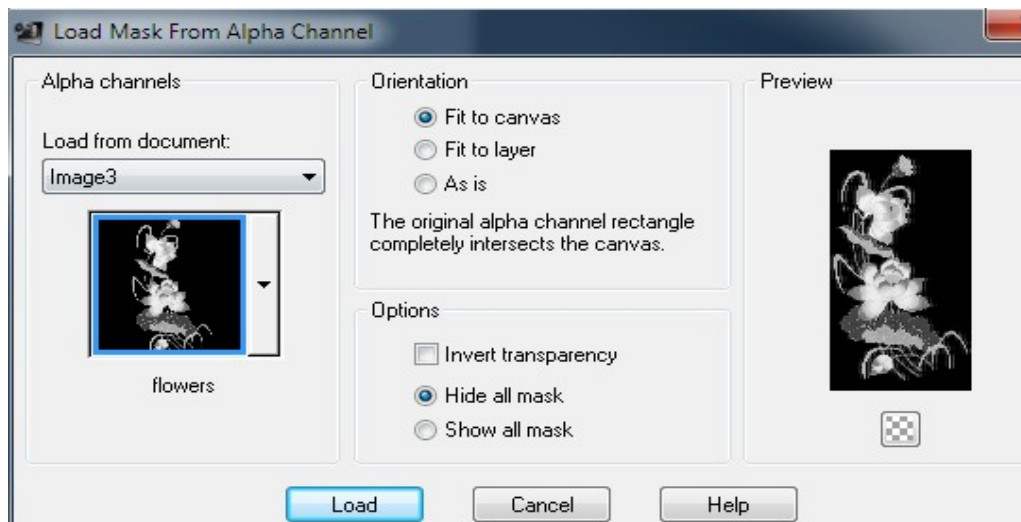
Open a transparent image 354x660 and floodfill with a solid colour of choice. This is where you can experiment with different colours to achieve the desired resulting colour of the masked flower.

I filled my canvas with solid black.

On the Menu bar, open Layers, Load/Save Mask > Load Mask from Alpha Channel...



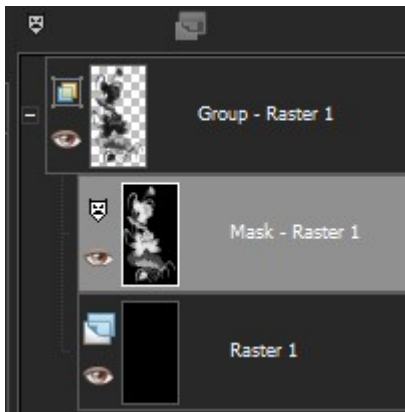
Another dialogue box will open as seen below.



In the thumbnail image on the left you can see the flowers Channel I saved. The drop-down says Image3, which is the original name of the Mask we made above. Choose the above settings and click Load. The image will take up the flood fill canvas colour on a transparent background, as shown below.



The Layers palette will be showing three layers.



Group-Raster1

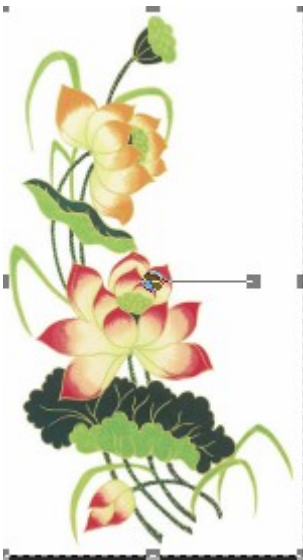
Mask-Raster1 and

Raster1 at the bottom.

If you Merge (Flatten) the image will be flattened to the canvas, on a white background, so right click and Merge Group.

If you wish to add a background colour, add a new layer and move the Group-Raster1 to the top. Select the new layer and flood fill with a colour of your choice or gradient. The image can then be Merged Visible.

We started with this:



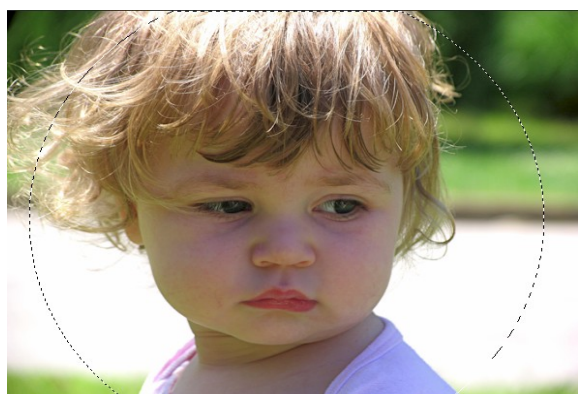
and finished with these styles of images.

Applying a Selection to an image that will give it a Masked look by using Feathering.

Open an image in PSP, resize if necessary to around 600 on the largest side for this tutorial.

Add a new layer and select the Selection tool, you can choose which type you want to use. I am using a circle.

Feather between 50 or 60, but no more than that.



Go to Selections, Invert. Flood fill with white, or whatever colour background you are placing the image on.



This is the result. Nice, isn't it.

How about making it a mask! Follow the instructions for the Mask tutorial.



This is a sure way of getting a good clean selection image that can also be saved as a channel or mask.

Remember, if saving as a channel to save the whole image as a PSP.Image so that the image will retain all data for future editing.

I hope you enjoyed the brief explanation of Channels, Alpha Channels, Masks and Selections