Small Argentium Headpins



I use 19-gauge (0.9mm) Argentium sterling silver round wire for crafting headpins that I use for bending earring backs and setting beads. For 2-inch headpins used to bend earring backs, cut the wire at 41/2-inch lengths and teardrop both ends with a 2mm ball to create a 4-inch double-terminated wire that is then cut in half. For 1½-inch length headpins used to set beads, cut the wire at 3½-inch lengths and teardrop both ends to create a 3-inch double-terminating wire that is then cut in half.

I recommend that you dim the lights to better see the subtle color changes of the Argentium silver as it transforms from a solid to a liquid state. Grip the middle of the cut wire in your pliers and bring the tip of the wire to the tip of the one-inch blue flame and count to three slowly. You will see the wire turn orange and make a quick flash of liquid shine as it melts and is pulled upward into a 2mm teardrop. Pull the wire out of the flame as soon as the liquid shine appears, and keep the wire vertical for another three seconds to allow it to air cool.

To teardrop the other end of the wire, turn your pliers over 180 degrees, so the first teardrop is now pointing upward. Repeat the three-second heating process to teardrop the opposite end of the wire, and then place the doubleteardropped wire down on the Solderite pad and let it cool slowly. Once cool, measure the teardrop's diameter with digital calipers to confirm that it is 2mm in diameter; if not, adjust your timing to reach this size. Clean the headpin wires in a pickle solution and then tumble-polish them with steel shot before using them to bend earring backs or set beads.

Tools: Propane torch; lighter, pliers; digital calipers; and a Solderite pad. Materials: 19-gauge, 3½ or 4½-inch Argentium sterling silver wires.







CAUTION: If you heat the wire too long and the teardrop swells to over 3mm in diameter, it will fall from the wire and splatter on your work surface, sending red-hot balls of silver everywhere. Until you get your timing dialed-in, I would advise working over a bowl of water to catch your accidentally-dropped tears.