



BITS: TECH NOTE

Alfa Romeo Milano: Heater Air Inlet Leaf Guard Screen

By Karl Maxon

Apparently, Milano's are prone to collecting leaves in the air inlet, where they accumulate right on top of the fan motor resistor and can start on fire. The topic and solution can be found on internet bulletin boards like AlfaBB. Those boards describe how to remove the fan motor and check for and clean any leaves found. My Milano was totally clean so any worries there were averted, but to keep the issue from ever flaring up I thought it best to add a screen over the air inlet. I thought I'd share the measurements and general process for adding a screen over the inlet.

You'll have best access to the vent inlet with the hood up and working from the passenger side of the well opening. No wires or wiper arms or motors need to be removed during this project. When fitting the screen you'll see the wiper arms will clear the screen when completed. See photo of completed screen both out of and in the car.

Needed:

3 foot section of gutter leaf guard from hardware store – not too fine a mesh though- that would restrict airflow!

3M double sided automotive trim tape, 1 inch wide, grey color, from auto parts store

Edge trim (rounded) from auto parts store

Tools:

Metal snips (Sheet metal shears)

Scissors

Tape measure

Final dimensions I ended up with - yours may vary slightly:

12" long across back

11" long across front

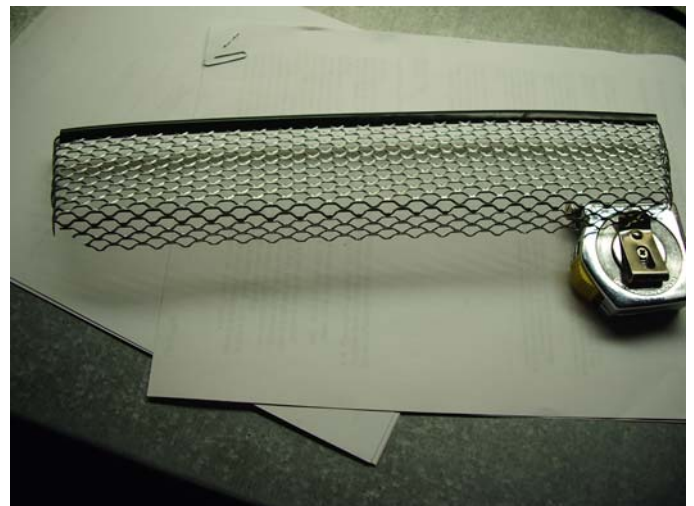
5/8" drop on side (side height)

3/4" drop in front (front height)

2 1/2 – 2 5/8 " deep (from front fold)

Start with a rectangle cut out from the gutter screen with generous proportions (about 14" long and 4" wide or so)

Cut each end at a slight angle so the length is maybe 14" at the back and 13" at the front. You can reach in where the heater vent opening is and measure your own inlet size before cutting, and allow for the height of the sides and front of the opening when fine tuning the screen dimensions.

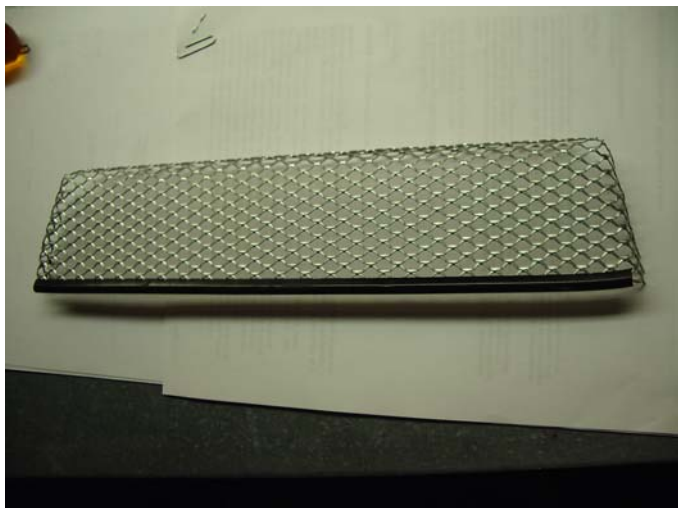


I also cut notches in each front corner to allow the ends to be bent downward about 5/8" on each side, and to allow the front to be bent downward about 3/4". I also cut a small angle at the back of the side bends to allow the screen to fit close to the firewall. These small notches and angles were added along the way to help with the custom fit of the bends.



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After a couple of tries by sliding it in from the passenger side of the opening you'll be able to get the screen sized just right over the opening. Take it back out one last time and put the double sided tape on the sides and front sections that are in contact with the opening. Then put screen back in and reach in and press the screen tightly to the opening to attach the tape. To press the driver side tape I used a long wooden dowel and inserted it through and around gaps where the wiper motor and arms were in the way. The steps above are more evident once you take a look and try the initial screen fitting.



For fitting of the screen, it may help to first bend the driver's end down and the front down, and then insert and try the fit of the screen over the inlet opening before making the final bend (and cutting of the final length) on the passenger end of the screen. Also put the edge trim along the back edge where the sharp tangs are that go along the back firewall before making the final bends as well, to ensure the front bend is as close as possible to the right spot. That's how I ended up making a "custom" fit to the opening.



One final note: There is an official Alfa Romeo technical service bulletin Number 90.01 "Leaf Intrusion Barrier" that appears to be a much more involved process, and creates a screen that covers the entire well behind the engine firewall, in case you're interested or have need of a screen to cover the entire opening if you live in heavily wooded areas with lots of leaves or a history of the car collecting leaf and other material in the entire well.

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