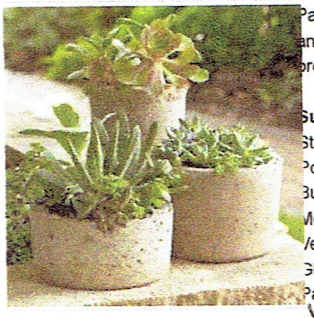
Papercrete Instructions



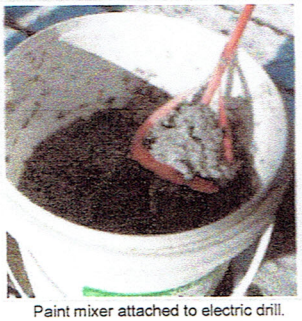
Papercrete is a great alternative to Hypertufa. I have made pots both ways, and I find the papercrete to be easier to handle and the finished product to be superior. Now that is just my novice opinion, but here are the instructions so you can create a project and see for yourself.

Supplies:
Stack of Newspaper ...nothing with a shiny finish
Portland Cement
Bucket 3-5 gallon
Mold for your project
Vegetable oil & an old paint brush
Gloves, latex or vinyl
Paint Mixer that you can attach to your electric drill (optional)
VERMICULITE

Molds:
Molds are easy to find. You probably have something around the house that will work great. Remember you can mold to the inside or the outside of a container. Plastic dish pans, or assorted plastic planters make great molds. Be sure to oil your mold by applying a thin coat of vegetable oil with an old paint brush so the mold will release once your pot is dry. Now that you have all your supplies you can begin your project.

Begin by tearing newsprint into strips about 1 inch in width or you can use a shredder. Shredding by hand is easy and will take no time at all. Start shredding at least 24 to 48 hours before you want to put your project together. Into a 3 to 5 gallon bucket add your shredded strips, pack them tightly and add water. Add as much water as the paper will absorb. Leave the paper in the bucket for a minimum of 24 hours, but 48 hours or longer will make it easier to turn your strips into pulp. After the paper is well soaked, use a paint mixer inserted into an electric drill to pulp the saturated paper. This is a messy job, and it is best done outside.

Formula:
To the freshly pulped paper the following formula works well.
3 parts paper
2 parts portland cement
1 part vermiculite



Paint mixer attached to electric drill.

To the freshly pulped paper add (2) 34 oz. coffee cans full of portland cement and (1) 34 oz. coffee can of vermiculite. The ingredients are not set in stone, but this formula holds up well and is easy to mold and finish.

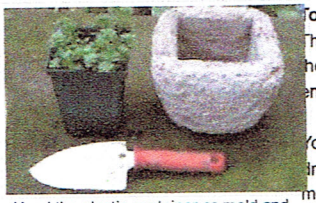
Use your mixer again and add water a little at a time as necessary. You will know you have added enough water to the final mixed product when you take a handful (gloved!) and squeeze it tightly; a little water will be released between your fingers. This mix will remain workable for a couple of hours, giving you plenty of time to get everything completed.

After your mix is ready you will be applying it to your well oiled mold of choice. Before you start building make sure you have your hands protected with latex or vinyl gloves because the portland cement is hard on your hands.

Apply mixture to inside of mold.

To mold on the inside:
Spread a layer on the bottom and then use a finger to make drainage holes and to check the thickness of your layer. On a span of 18 inches or less a thickness of the mix should be 3/4 of an inch thick.

Once you have established a thickness on the inside bottom of the mold you will begin building up the sides of the mold. The best way to get the mixture to adhere is to take a handful and press firmly to the side of the mold. Continue adding and pressing until you have build up the desired thickness along the walls. The mixture is easy to work with and will allow you to shape and smooth for an extended period of time until you are satisfied with the end product.



Used the plastic container as mold and applied mixture to outside.

To mold on the outside:

There will be times that it may be easier to use the outside of the mold to shape your project. The principals are pretty much the same. Turn your mold upside down so the bottom is facing up, and place it on a piece of wood so you can move the entire project if you need to.

You will start covering the bottom of the mold until you get the desired thickness, about 3/4 to 1 inch. Make sure you put your drainage holes into the bottom. Instead of working your way up the walls of the mold you will be working your way down the mold. Working on the outside of the mold allows you to be creative because you have access to the outside of your pot. You may add stones, imprint a pattern or whatever you want.

Once complete, your project will need to dry. Most projects can be turned out of their molds after sitting at room temperature for 24 hours, but it will be fragile for another 24 hours. Don't remove the mold too early. Once the mold has been removed, you should give the project a week to completely dry and harden. Once dry you can use a utility knife or 100 grit sandpaper to smooth the rough edges. Allow the finished item about 3 weeks to cure before moving outside in the weather.

Allowing the project to weather will help leach out the excess lime in the portland cement. The lime is very alkaline and may affect any plants your might want to place in your new pot.

Recipes for a mix can be adjusted as long as the 3-2-1 mixture is maintained. While nothing is set in stone, this recipe will result in a superior finished product. You may experiment with the fillers. In place of vermiculite you might try sand, perlite, or similar ingredients. Have fun and experiment!

Instructions based on Papercrete By Lee Coates