



Hypertufa Pots



Hypertufa originated in England as a replacement for the rapidly disappearing livestock watering troughs. It's now a hobby enjoyed by increasing numbers of gardeners.

Hypertufa looks like rock, can be cast into almost any shape and is strong enough to withstand Kansas winters. It is lightweight, as compared to similar containers made from cement. Traditionally, homemade hypertufa pots are used for alpine gardens, miniature rock gardens and bonsai.

To get started, you will need the following supplies:

- Tub to mix ingredients (wheelbarrow works well)
- Rubber gloves (lime in cement will burn hands)
- Mask (to avoid breathing lime dust)
- Pot to use as a mold
- Plastic trash bag

Here's our favorite hypertufa recipe, using a 13 oz. coffee can to measure the dry ingredients and the water:

- 2 parts Portland cement (NOT the kind you just mix with water)
- 3 parts vermiculite
- 3 parts peat moss or potting mix
- 1.5 to 3 parts water
- 1/4 cup acrylic bonding agent
- Optional—concrete dye (use white Portland cement)

First, select a pot to use as your mold and determine the amount of materials needed. The recipe above will cover a 1 gallon pot.

To start your recipe, mix the dry ingredients together. Add the acrylic bonding agent to 1 part water and mix in with the dry ingredients. Slowly add the remaining water as needed to achieve a 'cookie dough' consistency. (The amount of water will vary from batch to batch so be careful not to add too much at one time.)

Place your pot mold upside-down on a protected surface. Cover the outside of the pot with a plastic trash bag. (This makes it easier to remove the mold.) Apply your hypertufa mixture to outside of the pot, starting at the bottom (pot rim). Apply at a thickness of 1.5-2" to the pot sides and 2" to the pot bottom. Make the bottom of the pot as level as possible. Allow the pot to set 24 hours then remove the mold.

At this point, the pot is still 'workable' and now is the time to carve designs and make adjustments to level the bottom. Use a wire brush, screwdriver, chisel, etc. to finish your design.

For a 'two-pot' method, you'll need an inside pot and an outside pot that is at least 3" wider and 2" deeper. First fill the larger pot with 2" of hypertufa mix. Place the smaller pot (covered with plastic) on top of the hypertufa in the larger pot. Fill in the area between the two pots with more hypertufa mix. Allow the pots to set 24 hours then remove the molds.

After carving/designing your pot, cover it with a plastic bag as the pot continues to dry. After 2-4 weeks, remove the plastic from your dry pot. Over the next six months, occasionally rinse the pot to 'de-lime' it. After this six month period, your pot is ready to plant!