

Trough Making Instructions

Supplies you will need:

A plywood board approx. 3' by 2'

Note: We purchased particle board at Home Depot, large (8' x 4') sheets are \$14.00. Have sheets cut in half down the length in the middle; then have 2 more cuts made at 3' lengths.

This will give you 4 3' x 2' boards and 2 2' x 2' smaller boards or 6 boards per sheet.

Plastic covering for your board (a large black trash bag works well) and a large black plastic bag or sheet of plastic to cover your trough to transport home; and then to store your trough in once removed from board to cure in garage.

A dowel about $\frac{3}{4}$ " for making drainage holes in bottom of your trough

A 2' $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 2' $\frac{1}{2}$ " flat board for shaping & defining your trough

A spray bottle filled with water

A large plastic bucket to hold sand

A smaller plastic bucket for moving trough mixture from wheelbarrow to work area

A plastic bucket for measuring composition materials

Metal wire brushes for finishing after trough has been cured

Fireplace lighter to burn off fiber mesh on exterior of trough

Wheelbarrow

2 hoes

Screen for screening peat moss

Hose with water supply

Paring knife to remove trough from mold

Heavy duty rubber gloves

Face mask (for screening peat moss & mixing)

A carpenter's level

Wooden paint stirrers

A large table, or saw horses and a large sturdy board

Containers to use as shapes for molding your trough

Note: Good items are foil pans such as turkey, etc. from grocery store; plastic containers, plastic pots, etc.

Grubby clothes! An apron is also suggested

Builder's Sand (not playground sand, Home Depot)

Peat Moss (bags of Miracle Gro work well, Home Depot)

Portland Cement (Type 1, Home Depot)

Perlite (Gardener's Center)

Fibermesh (available in small bags from O&G in Stamford)

Trough Recipe courtesy of Lois Baylis:

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ parts Peat Moss

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ parts Perlite

1 part Cement

1 large handful of "Fiber Mesh"

(important, use the same bucket to measure all)

Trough Making Instructions

1. Cover your plywood board with plastic. Then cover the plywood board with about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ " of flattened, evenly spread moist sand. Place your mold upside-down (bottom facing up) on top of the sand. Then cover your mold to the desired shape with moist sand – about an inch thickness of sand covering your entire mold. Use your spray water bottle to keep the sand mold evenly moist. Use your flat board or a wooden paint stirrer to level off and shape the bottom of the mold. Cover your mold with plastic while you mix your trough composition.
2. Screen peat moss, remove large particles.
3. Measure Perlite and Peat Moss and place in wheelbarrow. With hoes, mix well.
4. Add a handful of Fiber Mesh, and again mix well.
5. Next measure cement and add to wheelbarrow. Mix well with hoes.
6. Now slowly add water and with hoes mix all well.
7. Working in one corner of the wheelbarrow, adding water slowly and with your gloved hands, combine and mix all materials together. Slowly add more composition to this corner along with water, and build on this mound of mixture, mixing it all together and mounding it in this one corner. Continue in this manner mixing more of the dry composition with water and add to the mound in the corner where you started until all composition in the wheelbarrow is the same consistency. It should be moist but not wet.
8. Wait 5 minutes for trough composition to set before using. Keep sand mold covered with plastic when not in use so that it doesn't dry out.
9. When trough composition is ready, take one handful at a time and roll it into the shape of a "sweet potato" in your hand. Starting at one end of your mold, pack this "potato" onto your mold. Make your next handful of "sweet potato" and pack it in along side at the base of your mold next to your first "potato". Flatten the pieces out against your mold as you go. Continue along in this manner until the entire base of your trough is completely covered. Use your spray bottle with water to keep all moist and wet while you are working on attaching one piece to another. Do not make your pieces too thin as otherwise your trough will not be sturdy.
10. Continue making handfuls of composition starting at your original point, and layering all around, one level at a time, until all sides of your mold are covered. Like a building, one story at a time.
11. Next continue with the bottom of your trough in the same manner, starting with one end and placing/filling in the entire bottom area of your trough and spraying with water as you go, until your entire mold form is completely covered with composition.
12. Use your flat board to flatten out and grade the sides and bottom of your trough. You can also use implements to give the exterior of your trough a design if desired. A wood paint stirrer is good to use to shape the bottom edge along the sand.

Trough making instructions, continued

13. When your mold is complete, take your dowel and poke 1 or 2 holes (depending on trough size) completely through the composition to the sand layer for your drainage holes. Do this by gently rotating the dowel clockwise and counterclockwise until you can feel it break through to the sand underneath.
14. Cover your trough in a plastic bag, transport your board with trough home and let it sit in your garage for 2 to 3 days to cure, turning the plastic cover over every few hours so that condensation doesn't build up, helping it to dry. Keep the trough covered with the plastic.
15. After 2-3 days, remove the plastic, and using a paring knife carefully remove cement trough from your sand mold. Turn it over, gently scraping off all sand. Use metal brushed to rough up the outside, shape the rim. A paring knife can also be used for shaping. Pay attention to your water drain holes – scrape them flat on the inside and make sure the hole(s) are clear. Place your cleaned up trough back in the plastic bag. Bag up the used sand and return it along with your board to Debbie Bussey.
16. After hardening off your trough for 1 month to 6 weeks (the longer you allow your trough to cure, the better), remove trough from plastic bag and place in your yard under a shrub and let it cure outside over the winter.
17. In the Spring clean off your trough with a metal brush, removing any remaining sand particles. Use a fireplace lighter to burn off any Fibermesh particles that show on the exterior of your trough. You are now ready to plant!

The GCD Hort committee now has on hand most of the supplies you would need to make troughs. You would simply need to purchase your own composition materials. Contact Debbie Bussey if you would like to borrow them for your own use.