



One in a series.....from my sacred gardens

Troughs and Things

I've always been envious of those gardeners with an assortment of natural looking large concrete/stone troughs for housing their precious cacti/succulents plants & et al. The more north one meanders, the plants that are used morph more into alpine plants rather than my dry land plants. Their dramatic looking troughs along with other various sized organic shaped pots are created with a process called *hypertufa*. Pottery makers in addition also make terrific smaller pots of amazing shapes and colors that they and I also utilize. *Hypertufa* is described as the process of mixing Portland cement, peat moss and most often perlite with water to create these dramatic hand-made containers.



South African succulents surviving the winter in this actual stone trough.

There are other possibilities for developing your own collection of containers like finding one of those old limestone carved horse watering troughs that weigh a couple hundred pounds... that would be oh so cool. But, they are almost impossible to locate now let alone if you do, cost a small fortune just for one. Even if you did locate a candidate, it almost requires a steam shovel to move it to that just right place on your property. Pictured above is a solid stone trough I bought a few years ago which is carved out of something quite hard... marble or something else but, it is terribly heavy and cost me \$\$\$. I used a hand truck to move it on the few rare occasion I thought it needed a new location (necessary to avoid a double hernia).

Hypertufa created troughs are much much more lighter than those stone behom-eths although to my mind that appellation that is currently used seems puzzling ... one part references a natural occurring rock called *tufa* (which doesn't naturally occur around here)—but worse... the *hyper* portion of the name?? creates a bit of unnecessary confusion. The results of that cement and the other ingredients creates an anthropic rock that I'd prefer to call *nouveau creux*... which in French, means 'new trough' much more sexy than *hypertufa* and is if you understand French, much clearer (or not).

To begin planning for this project I ordered a book called *Hypertufa Containers* by Lori Chips which is a decent starting point because the book does a rather complete job picturing and explaining the various process(s) one can initially employ. Along the way I watched quite a series of You Tube videos which often were uneven at best in their various take on methods to achieve a planter but, they nevertheless were free.

Things necessary to begin to make your own nouveau creux:

- A. Portland cement
- B. Cement mixing bin (wheel barrow worked for me)
- C. Dust Mask(s)... cement dust/peat moss/etc dust is not good!!
- D. Containers for measuring the dry ingredients
- E. Heavy Duty Long plastic gloves... dry cement is caustic
- F. Cement coloring
- G. Metal Brush
- H. Rasp to shape the starting to firm up container.
- I. Putty knives/cement finishing tools
- M. Peat Moss or Perlite or both
- O. Sand... to make a form
- P. Coveralls (process makes short work of nice clothes)

Sturdy table or two to work on... outdoors to contain the mess.

This is not necessarily a complete list but, it can start you going on your own personal scavenger hunt to run down-locate-purchase-repurpose the necessary items if you care to tackle this project yourself.

Only thing I've made for now... run out of motivation. More next year....?? Hardly a drought hardy mix of plants but, it humored me nevertheless.

