

BEAUTIFUL PLANTING BOXES FOR OUTDOOR OR INDOORS

CREATED FROM RECYCLED POLYSTYRENE CONTAINERS. Designed by Birdy Heywood



We throw so much away these days and much of it can not even be recycled. So why not put it to good use by altering it to create something useful?

I am using weatherproof wood glue for these projects and also outdoor filler to create a stone effect. The wood glue when completely dry becomes clear. It will stick to plastic at first or in this case to polystyrene. However, when dry, it forms a sort of film which would eventually peel off. To overcome this, the whole outside surface needs to be covered with an absorbent material, saturated with the wood glue. I am using medical swabs which are super absorbent and also not expensive. You could also use thin strips of muslin or cheese cloth. This also strengthens the box.

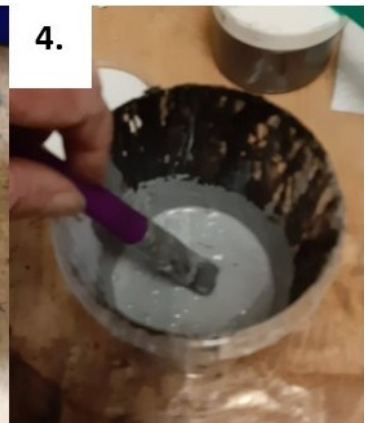
The import thing is to first of all apply the glue to the surface before laying the swab or muslin over it. Then with a nice stiff paintbrush paint over the top. **Press down firmly** to ensure the glue has soaked right through. If you are covering a cracked plastic pot, make sure the swabs or muslin, are joined all the way around and also fold a little over the rim before applying the filler as explained for the boxes.



You will only need some simple, inexpensive supplies and a polystyrene container. The container can be sourced from vegetable and grocery shops. A plastic cover for your work surface is recommended and an apron to wear. This is a great way to recycle and create something really useful in the process. I am listing the materials I used on these boxes but there are many other suitable brands on the market. The main thing with the wood glue and the filler is that they are fit for outdoor use.



Wood Glue. I picked this brand because it cost under £16.00 for 5 litres and cures really quickly. The filler was also very reasonable and fit for indoor and outdoor use. The swabs are super absorbent. Black colour pigment easy to source on the internet.



1. I removed the rim from the top of the box as this is quite thin and not very strong. Also the pieces can be used to stick to the sides of the box as decoration. I poured some of the wood glue into a plastic container that had a lid. I added about 2 tablespoons full of the black pigment powder and stirred it in thoroughly. Whilst wet the mixture will appear to be grey but rest assured, when it dries it will be black.



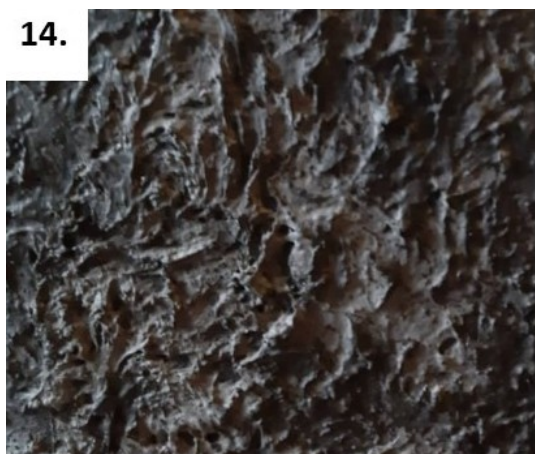
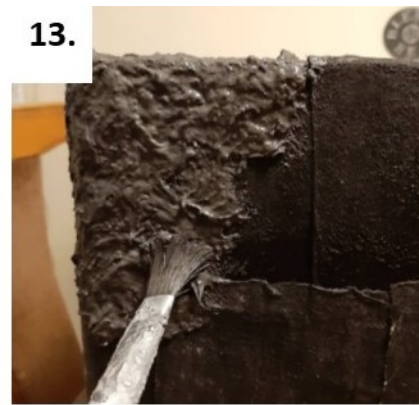
5. Using a nice stiff brush apply the solution along one side of the inside of the box to about 3 inches deep. Lay the swab over the top keeping it double then add more of the solution. Brush firmly so that the swab is completely saturated. Once you have reached the end turn to the outside of the box. And add more solution. Adhere the swab in the same way. Using the black liquid ensures that you don't miss bits!



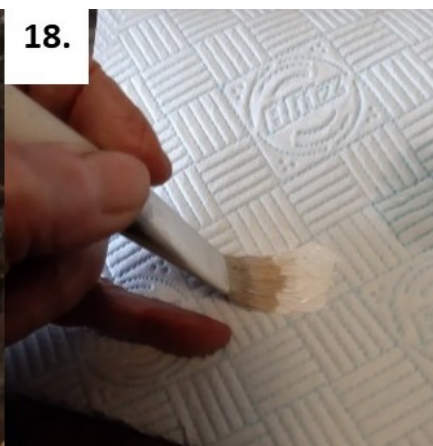
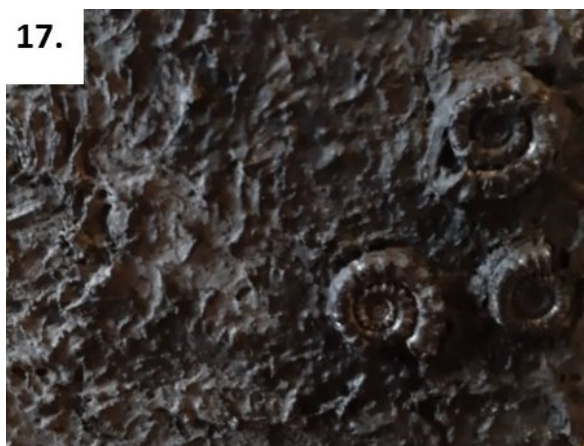
8. Attach the doubled up swabs all around the box. Add extra bits to the sides to make them stronger. Once complete and dried out you can work on the base of the box and the sides until completely covered.



11. Once completely covered allow the whole thing to dry. Mix up some more wood glue and black powder then add the filler until you obtain a nice stiff consistency. Dab on to the outside of the box to create texture. I like to use the paintbrush again for this. Paintbrush can be washed out in water.



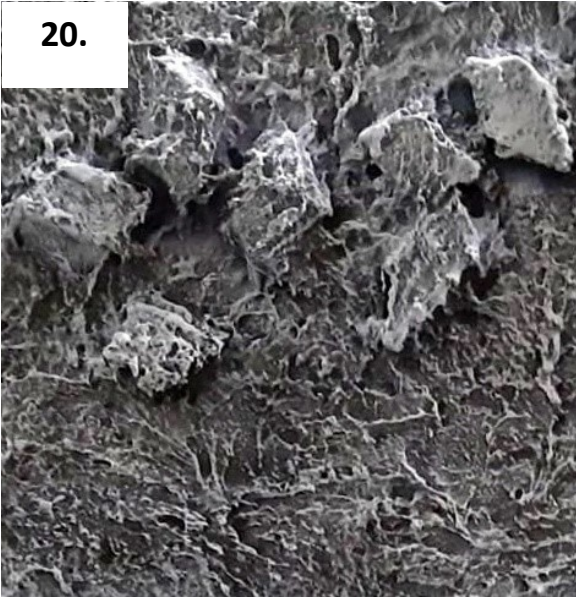
14. Cover the whole outside of the box. You will need to mix up several batches of the filler and glue to do this. If you mix up too much it will harden before you can apply it. **15.** Once the outside has been covered begin on the inside. On this box I applied some plaster ammonites I already had. To apply, coat the back with the thickened wood glue you used to create the stone effect then press firmly to attach. Then cover the whole ammonite with the wood glue mixed with the black pigment. Cover completely to protect them from any moisture seeping in. You could also use sea shells to decorate, or as in photo **20.** add the bits you took from the top of the box. **21.** Shows other suggestions for adding to create interesting texture.



17. Allow the box to dry out completely. To achieve this lovely stone effect I prefer to use a brush with stiff bristles. You will need water resistant white paint. I use ordinary acrylics and they seem to stand up to the rain, frost and sunshine just fine. Hugo the dragon is a prime example of this. I used similar materials to create him and dry brushed him with acrylic paint. He has been outside in all winds and weathers for 2 years and looks as good as the day he was born!

Dry brushing explained: Dip your brush into the white paint, then remove it by brushing over a sheet of kitchen towel. A tiny bit of paint will remain. Brush over the surface of the box and the white paint will adhere to the raised surface. If you leave too much paint on the brush you will just be painting the surface grey. It is essential to leave the crevices black to create the depth.

20.



21.



Enjoy experimenting with texture. Here are some suggestions: Dried lavender, lolly sticks, matchsticks, pistachio nut shells, broken bits of polystyrene, lace, variegated cardboard, and of course shells or ammonites. If you Google ammonite moulds you will find some to use for plaster or you could also mix the wood glue and filler together until quite thick and use that in a mould instead of plaster.. Allow to dry completely before removing it though.



ENJOY EXPERIMENTING

I aim to create at least 10 of these to achieve
a raised bed.

More tips and ideas coming soon