

concrete basics

What, no rules?

If you made mud pies as a kid, you can create concrete garden art. It's an easy project, but it yields sophisticated results. Start with the nitty-gritty, then try our techniques for customizing, shaping, and finishing concrete ornaments and outdoor decor.

What, no recipe?

Just add water to powdered mixes, such as portland cement. Follow the package instructions. Wear gloves and a dust mask when you mix concrete. If your concrete is too wet, add dry mix until the blend holds its shape when you squeeze it. Brush vegetable oil on the inside of a mold before casting wet concrete so the form slips off easily once the concrete has set.

What will you add?

Make your projects lightweight and portable with a custom mix called hypertufa (2 parts portland cement, 1 part perlite, and 1 part peat moss). Add color to dry concrete before mixing or apply it to the surface of a finished project. Colorants include powdered pigments, masonry paint, and stain.

What tools are best?

No fancy tools are needed, but these prove handy: a reusable tub (for mixing), a cheap trowel (for stirring and scooping), and an empty milk jug (for adding water a little at a time).

DIY product pick:

A sturdy mold like this 8x15-inch leafy design makes it easy to crank out edger after durable edger. You'll find shapely options for edging, spheres, and more at gardenmolds.com and historystones.com.



Havin' a ball

Concrete spheres bring lasting beauty to any garden. Cast a half sphere at a time, using 10-, 12-, or 15-inch-diameter molds. Sandwich two halves to make a round with a spread of mortar holding the works together. Dabs of outdoor acrylic paint add a mossy appearance that becomes even more realistic with weather and age.

On the edge

Plant some personality in your garden using concrete edging. It stands up to all kinds of weather and helps keep soil in beds, lawn and weeds out. Start with a concrete mold and a bag of extra-strength, fiber-reinforced concrete mix. Customize your creations with concrete colorants.

