HYPERTUFA TROUGHS

MATERIALS

- Portland Cement
- Peat Moss (sieved to remove sticks and chunks)
- Perlite
- Concrete Reinforcement Fibers (Fiber Mesh and Hi-Tech Fibers are 2 brand names)-these can usually be obtained from concrete suppliers

MIXING

(*For safety wear dust mask when mixing dry ingredients & waterproof gloves when handling wet mix)

- •Measure 2 parts Portland Cement, 3 parts peat moss and 3 parts perlite into mixing tub or wheelbarrow (for a small dishpan trough a half-gallon ice cream container makes a good measuring container)
- •Mix dry ingredients well and add a small handful of reinforcing fibers and mix them in -you should be able to see a number of fibers all through the mix
- •Slowly mix in enough water until you can squeeze a handful to form a ball which holds together and just a few drops of water comes out

FORMS

- •Make a pile of sand the size and shape you desire, cover with a plastic bag - mold hypertufa over it
- •Dishpans, feed pans, plastic tubs, cardboard box with plastic bag liner, styrofoam insulation cut to desired size

BUILDING

Using gloves place handfuls of the hypertufa in the bottom of your form and pat it firmly into place (about 1 to 1 1/2 inches thick for a small container, 2 inches for a large one). Place several wooden dowels in the bottom to form drainage holes. Continue by building up the sides until all sides are the desired height and thickness. Then cover the trough tightly with plastic and leave it in a shady place or in your garage to harden.

CURING, UNMOLDING & TEXTURING

After 24-72 hours the trough should be hard enough to work with, it shouldn't be scratchable with your fingernail. Carefully remove from mold, it is still a bit fragile at this point. Rough up the exterior with a wire brush, putty knife, etc until it has the look you want.

FINAL CURING

Spray the trough lightly with water and wrap it in plastic. Allow to cure as above for at least 1 week, 1 month will give you 25% more strength. The trough can now be removed from the plastic and placed outside to weather for at least 2 months; this will remove alkaline chemicals from the cement which would be harmful to plants.

HANDBOOK ON TROUGHS published by the North American Rock Garden Society

The best source of information on troughs is this inexpensive little book. It is 76 pages and includes 28 color photos and numerous drawings. It includes detailed information on building troughs and also has chapters on soil mixes, suitable plants and proper maintenance. It is well worth the post paid price of **$6.50**, you can use the order form below.