



# HYPERTUFA 201

“THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE  
HUMAN BEING IS TO IMAGINE.”

—JAMES HILLMAN

# THE EARLY PROJECTS

## IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WERE BOWLS...

We all have to start somewhere when we begin to learn something new, and when I commenced my hypertufa adventure I began with a set of four plastic bowls. You’ve probably seen the exact set in your own local Wal Mart or Kmart or Shopko. By the end of that first hypertufa summer I had added some one-gallon ice cream buckets to my repertoire (and gained about five pounds), but that first summer was essentially “the basic kitchen bowl hypertufa summer.” Years later when I started offering workshops to teach people how to make hypertufa, bowls seemed the perfect way to begin.

Bowls may sound boring to some. You, in fact, might prefer to skip these relatively easy projects and get right into some more spectacular garden art designs. But what could make a better conversation piece than a toad house? What could be more satisfying to your “waste not/want not” self than stretching a single mold into a half dozen designs? One of the things I like most about making hypertufa is that you don’t need to invest in a lot of specialized and expensive paraphernalia. A single bowl will go a long, long way, as you’ll see in this lesson.

This first lesson will help you learn how to modify a mold and will get you thinking about using the common containers you already have around your home. This lesson will also show you how to make openings in the walls of your hypertufa creations, and once you have those openings mastered you can go on to make lanterns and birdfeeders (**THE LATER PROJECTS – HYPERTUFA 301**). Believe me, your friends will be amazed at how skilled and artistic you are! You will smile, knowingly and sweetly, and say, “Thank you” in response to all the compliments. (And only you and I will know how easy it really is!)

## ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR-FIVE-SIX & MORE—ALL FROM ONE MOLD!

All of these projects are made with the bowl we use in the hypertufa workshops I conduct (shown in the upper right of this photo; it’s blue). My local Wal Mart always carries a supply. If you can’t find this exact bowl, well, it matters not one bit. Any rather similar bowl will work just as well.

I’ve arranged the instructions from the easiest design to the most challenging design, as follows:

- **Planter Number One**—No modifications to the bowl.
- **Planter Number Two**—The bowl is modified so that the planter is shallower than *Planter Number One*.
- **Birdbath Number One**—No modifications to the bowl.
- **Birdbath Number Two**—The bowl is modified as for *Planter Number Two*.
- **Toad House**—Just like *Planter Number One* except that there are no drainage holes, it’s turned upside down, and there is an opening on the side so the toads may come and go as they wish.
- **Herb Garden**—*Planter Number Two* sits on the bottom and *Planter Number One*, with some openings in the walls and turned upside down, sits on the top. They are glued together with—you guessed it—some hypertufa mix.



## PLANTER NUMBER ONE

1. Make the bottom of your planter at least 1.5" thick. Making it 2" thick would be even better.
2. Fill in the bottom of the mold first, pressing and pounding in the hypertufa mixture as you fill the bottom.
3. When you are satisfied that the bottom is thick enough, start filling up the sides of your mold. Use a small knitting needle, a darning needle, or a nail to measure the thickness. Other tools would also work.
4. For a mold this size, I've made the thickness of the walls anywhere from 1.25" to 2".
5. Planter A has walls that are 2" thick and come up slightly higher than the rim of the mold.
6. Planter B has walls that are 1.25" thick and don't come all the way up to the rim of the mold.
7. Using a 1/2" dowel or similar tool, form a couple of drainage holes in the bottom of the planter. These holes might fill in slightly during the initial curing phase. When you remove the planter from its mold after its initial curing you can use a screwdriver or similar tool to open up those drainage holes.

**A**



**B**



## PLANTER NUMBER TWO

Fill the bottom 2" — or more or less, depending on your preference — of your bowl with sand or perlite, top that with a dinner plate, and tape this plate to the walls of the mold using duct tape (See C). This minor modification will give you a planter that is shallower than what you have with *Planter Number One*.

**C**



## BIRDBATHS

1. If you look very carefully you will see that these are two differently shaped inserts. *Birdbath Number One* has a salad **bowl** inserted; *Birdbath Number Two* has a salad **plate**. Birds come to visit both of these shapes, although they seem to prefer splashing around in shallow water.
2. Follow the general guidelines given for the planters. You will need to decide how much hypertufa to put in the bottom of the mold before you insert your bowl or plate. Just keep testing by placing your insert inside the mold until you have a look that you like. There's no right or wrong way to do this except that keeping all walls at least 1.25" thick is wise.
3. Some people like to have their insert removable. Others like to cover up the edge so that it's in there permanently.
4. Experiment with different kinds of inserts. I've used old china, stoneware, clear glass, and even old ashtrays. I've also used metal and plastic bowls.
5. These make terrific gifts for people who live in condos or townhouses with decks. Most birdbaths are too large to fit on a small deck, but these are the perfect size. I also like to place these throughout my gardens, providing fresh drinking water for a variety of furry or feathered visitors.

BIRDBATH NUMBER ONE



BIRDBATH NUMBER TWO



## TOAD HOUSE

This is *Planter Number One* turned upside down. Do not make drainage holes but DO make an opening in the side — or on a couple of sides — so the toads can get in and out. You can form the doors with your fingers or work around a mold, such as a plastic bottle, if you prefer the look of a very smooth dome shape for the door.



Toads also like to nap in hypertufa birdbaths placed in the shade, especially on those really hot summer days!

## HERB GARDEN

### Special materials for this project:

3 hard plastic forms, approximately 2" in diameter. Let's call these "hole makers." Snap-on covers from hairspray containers or other spray cans work very well. Small plastic jars also work well as hole makers. Coat your hole makers with cooking oil before positioning them within the walls of your hypertufa creation.

1. Make one *Planter Number Two* and set it aside for its initial curing period. This will form the base of your herb garden.



2. Make one *Planter Number One* with the following modifications:
  - (a) Do not fill in the very bottom of the mold. The opening on the **top** of the finished Herb Garden is the **bottom** of your mold. This opening is about 5" in diameter.
  - (b) Start filling in the sides of your mold for *Planter Number One* with hypertufa, working up the sides for just a couple of inches. At that point place 3 hole makers equal distance from one another.
  - (c) Continue filling in the sides of the mold with hypertufa, making the walls the same thickness as you did for *Planter Number Two*.



Position the OPEN end of the hole maker facing the inside of the mold.



Position the SOLID end of the hole maker up against the side of the mold.

3. Remove these planters from their molds when they pass the scratch test. To remove the hole makers, gently tap on the solid end that was placed against the side of the mold.
4. Mix up some hypertufa to use as glue to hold these two pieces together. Spray the rim of each piece with water, spread on some hypertufa, and place the two planters rim to rim with *Planter Number Two* on the bottom. Spread some hypertufa around the outside to cover up the seam. Spray this with water to help smooth it out. Let cure. This is another great gift idea for your gardening friends!

