

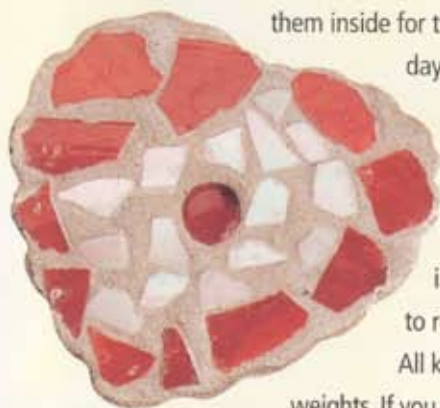


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Garden Stakes and Paperweights

Here are some ideas for using up odd tesserae from your other projects. Small mosaics can be paperweights, tiny garden decorations, or with a little ingenuity, fun flower stakes for the garden. "Plant" them in your garden for the summer, then bring



them inside for the winter to remind you of warm summer days. I used cookie cutters as molds and found that the lack of a backing was no problem if I set the cookie cutter on a pan covered with sand. If you use a plastic deli container for a mold, just punch a hole in the side for inserting the stake, then plan to cut the mold apart to remove the stone when it has hardened.

All kinds of molds may be used for making paperweights. If you use metal tart pans, aluminum pans or other

metal molds, you must paint them with a release agent such as dishwashing liquid. Small plastic deli containers are perfect for making these small mosaics, and you can just throw them away when they become cracked and worn. The instructions show how to make the garden stakes. For paperweights, just follow the same steps except for the ones that show inserting the stake.



MATERIALS



- molds:
- assorted metal cookie cutters or deli containers
- tin snips
- needle-nose pliers
- duct tape or vinyl tape
- metal stakes, 12" to 24" (30cm to 60cm) long and 1/4" (6mm) diameter
- glass nuggets and small pieces of stained glass
- pencil with eraser
- scissors
- dishwashing liquid, vegetable oil spray or petroleum jelly
- small paintbrush
- waxed paper
- cookie sheet or rigid board
- dust mask
- rubber gloves
- 1 1/2 lbs. (68 kg) (about 2 cups) stepping stone concrete mix will make two to three flowers
- small mixing bowl
- cookie sheet with sand
- mixing tool (craft stick)
- water
- 1 cup (288g) fine sand
- tablespoon
- optional: rubber spatula, water spray bottle, skid-resistant backing

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1 > Lay out tesserae. You can lay out your pieces on a paper tracing of your mold, or you can place the tesserae directly into the wet mix without planning ahead.



2 > Cut the cookie cutter. Prepare the cookie cutter mold by cutting a hole in it for the stake. Use tin snips to cut open the cookie cutter. Cut all the way through.



3 > Cut small notches. On one end at the halfway point cut a tiny notch about $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) long. Do the same to the other end.



4 > Bend back the corners. Use needle-nose pliers to bend the four notch points out so that when you close the cookie cutter there will be a small opening for the stake to fit through. Pinch the sharp points down for safety.



5 > Tape cookie cutter back together. Pinch the cookie cutter closed and insert the stake through the hole. Use duct tape to tape the cookie cutter closed. Insert the stake.

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6 > Apply a release agent. Use a small brush to cover the inside of the metal cookie cutter or tart pan with a thin coat of dishwashing liquid or petroleum jelly.

If the tart pan has an indented design on the bottom, as this one has, fill the indentation with sand to keep the wet mix out.



8 > Fill the molds. Using a rubber spatula or your gloved hand, fill the molds with mix, pushing it down firmly. Push the mix firmly around the stake and smooth the surface. Don't fill it to the top because embedding the pieces will raise the level of mix, possibly overflowing the mold.



9 > Embed the tesserae. Transfer the tesserae and use a pencil eraser to embed. Stay $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) inside the edges. Tap the sides of the mold a few times and lightly smooth the surface with your fingertips.



7 > Prepare the baking sheet. Protect the baking sheet with a piece of waxed paper; sprinkle it with a thin layer of sand. Set the cookie cutter on the sand and make sure the stake is level. The edge of my baking sheet did that nicely, but you may need to prop yours up a little more.

Estimate the amount of mix you will need to fill the cookie cutter or mold. If you start with 1 cup (3.4kg) of mix, add 3 tablespoons (45ml) of water and stir well. If needed, add a few drops of water at a time. The thick mix should clump together in your hand and won't seep under the cookie cutter. Check the time or set a timer for one hour.



While you're embedding, if the surface cracks because the mix is hardening or if the stake is bumped, spray the surface once with water, smooth it with your gloved fingers, and continue embedding.

10 > Set the stones aside to harden for 48 hours. Cover the molds loosely with plastic. Spray with water after 24 hours.

11 > Clean up the stones. After 48 hours, clean the surface as described on page 39. Untape the cookie cutter and carefully peel it away. (If you used a tart pan, turn it upside down and tap it gently.) Small concrete pieces are very fragile at this stage, so handle them with care. Round off the edges and rinse the stones.

12 > Elevate the stones and let them cure. Let the stones cure, elevated on a rack or on pencils, for five more days. Cover them loosely with plastic to slow the curing process. Spray them with water every 24 hours. After five days the garden stakes will be ready to be "planted." The paperweights need an additional seven days to cure. Cut cork, felt or skid-resistant backing to match the shape of each paperweight and glue it to the bottom.