

When you purchase one of our 1.5 gallon ready to use DIY Aragocrete Mix'es you have everything you need to start designing your new Aragocrete Designs except the water.

In this brief article we'll explain the proper way to mix and use our kit.

First is a few items you'll need to properly create your designs. Large preferable flat bottom square bucket for mixing everything in.

Mixing utensil being either a hoe, small hand rake or similar.

Water

Color Additive If Using

Box or flat area with plastic sheet layed down for actually making the design on.

You will also need some dry sand or gravel, to help hold your designs shape with.

You'll be using this to actually create your design or shape in. We usually moisten ours a little to help it hold a shape while were adding our aragocrete mix around it. Once dried simply remove the excess material.

You can see a sample of our arch's we make and the dry gravel was made into a hump to add the aragocrete mix across the top.

Now on the the fun parts...

First empty your 1.5 gallon bag of mix into your mixing bucket and stir together while everything is dry. This step is very important to ensure you get a even consistency thruout your batch.

Now you add your water, but be cautious and do not add it all at once, because this part is a little picky and if not done correctly could cause your rocks to not come out right.

You will need approximatly 3 cups of water overall.(again do not add it all at once). Now put about half of the water into your dry mix and very very thoroughly mix it all together. At this point it should still be a little on the dry side or maybe even have some mix thats not wet. Now you can continue to drizzle very small amounts of the remaining water a little at a time, and mixing very very well between additions.

You will want to have an end result of a consistency kinda like extra thick oatmeal.

Once it looks this way, try the ball squeeze test. Try grabbing a handfull of mix, squeeze it slightly and it should remain in the ball shape. If it does without crumbling completely apart then your ready to go.

Next is the actual design process... Well cover a couple of the basic designs here. An arch and a cave.

To Make an Arch...

First take some spare sand or almost anything thats like a tube and form it to the shape you want your arch.

Now simply drop clumps across your pile of sand or tubing from one side to the other to create your arch shape.

To Make a Cave...

First take out enough mix to create the base of the cave for the size you would like. We make ours about 4-6 inches across and 3-5 inches front to back.

Mash out the mix untill its all flattened in the shape you prefer and is about 1/4" to 1/2" thick. This will be the bottom of your cave.

Now take small amounts (about quarter sized) and align them all the way around the

perimeter of the cave base you created above. But ensure you leave an opening for the open end of the cave.

Now take some of your spare sand and fill the bottom of the cave, up to the desired height you want the inside of the cave to be.

Next you take some more mix, and cover all the sand you added on top of the cave base, to continue making the side walls and the top.

That it! You've just made your first aragocrete designs.

Here are a few helpfull hints and tips you can use.....

If you have sensitive skin use some latex disposable gloves. When initially mixing your dry mix it will seem a little too dry at first. Let it stand about a minute after mixing to ensure its finished settling and soaking up water. The more on the dry side the mix is, the stronger it will be.(be cautious its not too dry, remember the squeeze ball test above) If using color tint additive, you can add the contents of our custom color tint to the dry mix when first mixing it, or sprinkle it on your rocks once you have them designed. All color leeching of the tint will be done during the curing process. The finished and cured rocks will be much lighter tint than the day you make them and the colors will not leech into your tank once the rocks are cured completely. Once your designs are made, let them sit at least 24 hours before handling, and then move them cautiously as there still not completely set up yet. After 48 hours you can handle and move your rocks fairly easily but still do so with caution as they do not attain their full strength for several more days. Now your rocks are ready to be cured. Ensure you follow the curing process very carefully to ensure everything is reef, coral and fish safe.

If in cold areas where temps dont get above 50degrees for most of the day, and your making your rocks outside you may need to purchase a cold weather curing agent from places like lowes or homedepot. You need this to ensure your mix doesnt dry out too prematurely and cause cracks and weakspots. The entire cement cureing process needs warmth and moisture to cure correctly.(if making your pieces indoors you should be fine)

Basic cureing process-- you need to keep your rocks moist for the first 48hours. Some people use spray bottles to mist their rocks with, some use a garden sprayer, what we use since were outdoors is a spray mister that hooks to a standard garden hose. We hood this up and run it after the rocks have been in molds for 12 to 16 hours and let it run for the next 24 to 36 hours. The key thing is just keeping your rocks very moist(not saturated wet) for the first 24 hours.

ADDITIONAL TIPS AND HOW TO'S

These are some common errors and issues people have when making aragocrete rocks and also some helpfull hints and tips.

1)--To keep from your rocks being very fragile when dried do not get mixture too soupy. If you do you need to add equal amounts of portland and sand to mixture to thicken it up. The mixture should look like its just slightly wet, and holds its shape when you squish it

in your hand. If its too wet, youll see a shiney wet look to the rock. It should almost look like its on the verge of being dry.

2)--If making your aragocrete rocks with a lot of large items like crushed coral or oyster shells, then double the amount of portland used and make sure and premix all the items dry before you add water.

3)--You must use portland type 3=FALSE- type 3 portland is only for use in extreme cold areas. It is a fast setting high strength yeld portland used in areas where temprature is below 50 degrees F. If your making your rocks indoors or in the warmer climates you definitely need to use and can use portland #1 or #2. It doesnt matter if its gray or white style, they both end up with same results. However if your going to be adding a little colors to your rocks we reccomend the white to help.(grey portland give a very dark, dark grey appearance in water)

NOTE: During the winter months if your not making your rocks indoors, and your temprature stays below 50 degrees for a majority of the days youll need to get a curing additive for use in cold weather to keep your rocks from cracking and to allow them to cure properly.

4)--Need to cure some small pieces- put them in your toilets tank, that way they get a fresh water change every time you flush. Will almost cut your cure time in half.

5)--CUREING TIMES--while this is a subject that will always be different the times we quote will always be approximates. You need to test your rocks pH before adding to your tanks.

A----If you happen to live near the ocean or a large river you can put your rocks in for about 4 weeks(sometimes sooner but not reccomended). When you pull your rocks make sure and do a ph test and ensure the ph is reading below 8.4

Luckily we live on the Gulf of Mexico so this is our choice and have never had any problems.(except occasionally remembering where we put the last batch at)

WARNINGDo not put aragocrete rocks or any cement based rocks into a small stream, creek, or small pond, because you will create biological kills and reak havoc on the ph and other chemical elements in these small bodies of water. If you choose to use natural bodies of water make sure they are large enough to disperse any chemical alterations without adverse affects of local marine fauna including fish,inverts, plants, sediments and even birds and other animals that use that water source!!!!!!

IF IN DOUBT.....THEN DONT USE IT

B----Pool or tub in your backyard- This way takes longer dependant on how often you change the water. But generally speaking approximately 6 weeks. This could be shortend by changing the water daily, or every other day.

You also need to put a circulation pump in if using a pool or rather large container.

C----- Bucket(indoors)- this way will take the longest for sure- approximatly 8 weeks. If you change the water our daily or every other day you could shorten this time dramatically.

D----Toilet Tank Method- great for those smaller pieces of aragocrete. Approximatly 3weeks dependant on flushing amount.-put your smaller peices in the toilet tank, and each time you flush you get a fresh water change.

E-----Everyones water is different depending on where you live. Carbonate hardness, chlorine content, ph level, these are all determined by where you get your water, wether its a well or with the local city system. So dont stress out if yours dont cure in exact same time as someone else's did, everyone will always have variations. Look at it like this, unless you lived in a Lab, no two batches will ever be alike.

Always do a ph test before adding your rocks to any tank with live animals in it. We do ours by having a vat of water with predetermined ph and then adding the rock, let it sit for 24 hours, then slowly with your hand stir the water in the vat and do a ph test. If you see little to no change then your set to go.

If you use a lot of crushed coral or oyster shells along with your aragonite sand you should end up with a ph level between 8.0 to 8.3

ALWAYS allow your rocks to cure in the mold for at least 48 hours before moving!!!

If your sand that is being used for a mold is damp all the way thru, then you should not need to do any misting or additional water sprinkeling to your rocks. The simple moister within your sand mold will provide plenty of moisture for your aragocrete to cure. If in doubt about moisture of sand, after your aragocrete has been sitting for 24 hours you can MIST some water on it, do not use sprinkler or garden hose...your almost guaranteed to get too much water in your rocks wich would make them brittle.