

Patricia's Pots



YOUR SOURCE FOR BEAUTIFULLY DECORATED TERRA COTTA

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HOW to MAKE a TERRA COTTA FLOWER POT BIRD BATH

For the base, the best product for outdoor painting is Patio Paints. I know they are a little pricey, but they are fade resistant, non-toxic and are suited for outdoor projects. Patio Paints also make a clear sealant that is non-toxic. This could serve as the sealant when your work is finished. If preferred, you could purchase a water-based polyurethane instead. There are a few that are non-toxic. Check the label. Whatever you choose, it won't be permanent. It is likely that your bird bath will require refinishing and touching up every other year. After all, it will be outside in the elements!

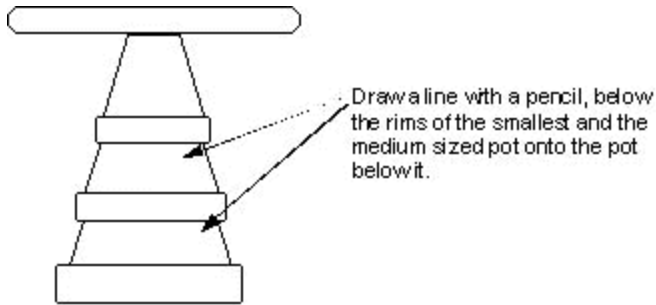
For the saucer of your bird bath, try to find a waterproof type that won't require any treatment inside the bowl, (where the water will go). For the outside, Patio Paints are again preferred.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- One each, 12", 14", and 16" terra cotta flower pots
- One - 20" diameter clay saucer. If you can find a waterproof saucer, that's even better; you won't have to seal the inside of it. If you choose pots that are smaller than those listed above, just be sure your saucer is 4" larger than your largest pot. This will keep the bird bath base and bowl in proportion.
- Paints in assorted colors suitable for your design. You can use Patio Paints or Plaid Durable Paints for the best resistance to fading. I have successfully used Sears Weatherbeater Satin or Flat as a base coat on many bird baths.
- Patio Paint Clear Gloss Sealant or some other water based sealant. The instructions for Patio Paints and Plaid Durable Paints don't call for one. I have always used one in spite of this. A sealant helps protect against water damage. Ultimately, this is up to you.
- Paint Brushes, Sponges, if desired, Stencils and Stamps
- Liquid Nails Construction Adhesive-A small tube is around \$2.00

HOW TO DO IT:

- Sand away any rough spots or loose clay particles on the rim, bottom edge, and outside of the pots and saucer.
- Stack the pots, starting with the largest pot, upside down, on the bottom, then the medium sized pot, then the smallest pot on top.
- Draw a line with a pencil, below the rims of the small and medium sized pot onto the pot below it. After you un-stack the pots to paint them, this will help you define the area that will be exposed when the pots are stacked. You don't want your design to be hidden!



- Seal the inside of all the pots, (and the saucer if it isn't waterproof), with oil-based polyurethane 2-3 coats. I also recommend sealing the lower edge of the largest pot, (the edge that will rest on the ground), as opposed to painting it. If you can, apply the polyurethane in a sunny place. The sun will "bake" the polyurethane as you work, causing it to set-up a little quicker. Let the polyurethane dry completely before handling your pots to paint them. A word about Thompson's Water Sealant; many visitors have suggested using Thompson's Water Sealant in place of polyurethane to seal terra cotta pots. I have never tried this, so I don't know if it works!
- Now that the pots are sealed, after they dry, they are ready to be painted with your choice of base paint. You can make each pot a different color, or they can all be the same. Paint them to match your house if you like! Soft, pastel colors will be best for painting brightly colored flowers and patterns. Remember, don't bother painting too far above the lines you have drawn which indicate where the pots will overlap. It is a good idea to go over your lines an inch or so, just to be sure of good coverage.



The two larger pots on this bird bath are painted light green, the small pot is yellow, and the saucer is white with a blue scalloped design.



On this bird bath the large pot is painted light green, the medium pot is light blue, the small pot is yellow and the saucer is white with blue stripes.

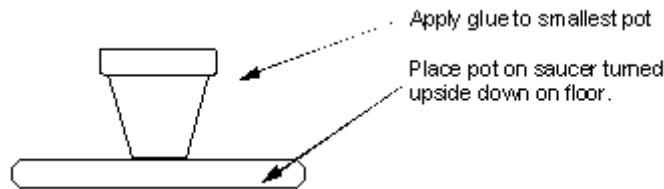
- Now the fun begins! Decorate the pots to your taste. Flowers, lady bugs and dragonflies are obvious choices. You can also paint your bird bath with personal touches that suit your home. If you like cats, paint a cat on the bottom pot. If you live near a lake, sail boats and lighthouses might be suitable. This is entirely up to you and it's the best part of creating your own!
- If you purchase Plaid Decorator Blocks to decorate your pot, they come with a pattern suggestion sheet and how-to instructions. You can also buy more than one set of blocks and mix patterns and shapes. You can use Decorator Blocks, stencils and stamps to help with your design process. Plaid does offer their products for sale at their web site. See below for specific suggestions.

- When you're finished decorating/painting your bird bath, let it dry thoroughly. Then seal the entire outside, (even the unpainted areas that won't show), with at least 3 coats of water based polyurethane. There are several of these on the market, available at craft, hardware and paint stores. Check to see if the product you select is OK to use over a painted surface. I stress water based polyurethane because oil based products have a yellow tint and will likely discolor your design.

HOW to INSTALL your BIRD BATH:

- I recommend that you glue the saucer to the smallest pot. This will prevent critters from breaking it when they climb up for a drink of water! This is also safer if you have children. To glue the two pieces together, run a generous bead of Liquid Nails Construction Adhesive on the smallest pot where it will be attached to the saucer. Always hold **both** the saucer and smallest pot when handling them, even after they are glued together.
- Turn the saucer over on the floor and place the small pot in center of saucer bottom-let dry overnight. I don't feel it's necessary to glue the remaining pots together. It should be stable enough without doing this. Besides, if it's all glued together, how would you move it inside for winter storage? It would be nearly impossible to lift!

Glue the top two pieces together like this!



- Do not place your bird bath directly on the ground. It will last longer if you minimize contact with the ground and moisture.
- Set on treated lumber or a patio stone.
- Conceal the lumber or stone with pebbles or mulch if desired.
- Starting with the largest pot, carefully stack pots into position. If they don't fit together without wiggling, use self-adhesive foam weather stripping, (the kind you use around windows and doors), to fill in the gaps. Apply the weather stripping to the inside of the rim, (where it won't be seen), of the pot that's wiggling! The foam will help to fill in these gaps and stabilize the bird bath.
- Gently work the pots into place. Do not press down on the pots or saucer - they will crack!

HOW to CLEAN and STORE your BIRD BATH

- To clean, wash with warm water and a mild detergent.
- Don't use abrasive cleaners or scrubby pads. They will scratch the finish!
- Bring your bird bath inside to a warm, dry location for the winter months.