

# Toad Abode Instructions

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I made this toad abode out of hypertufa during a class at Watson's Greenhouse in Lafayette, NY. You can view their website at <http://www.watsonsgreenhouse.com>. I did not think to take pictures during the whole process, so I hope my instructions can at least give you an idea how it was done.

## Supplies Needed:

2 – Plastic Pots approximately 14" across

1 – 3-cubic-foot bag of potting soil (no fertilizer)

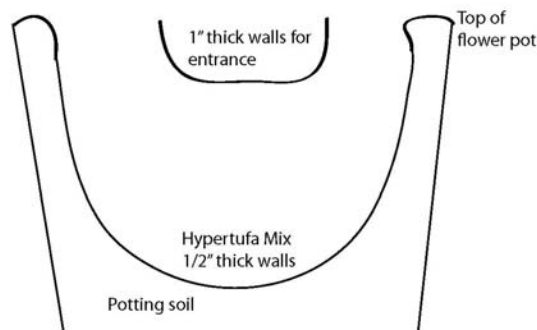
Your favorite hypertufa recipe

Water, preferably a hose with a sprayer attachment



To start, you need to make a mold for your toad abode using the plastic pots. One pot will be for the top of the toad abode and the other pot will be for the base of the toad abode. Any type of plastic pot will do, but it needs to be at least 12"-14" across and at least 12" deep, based on what you want the finished size of the toad abode to be.

Wet the potting soil using the mist setting on your garden hose. You want the soil to be damp enough to hold together, not dripping wet. Peat moss can take a few minutes to hydrate, so I'd suggest misting the potting soil and then waiting a few minutes, then mist it again, mixing with your hands to distribute the water. You want the potting soil to hold its shape when you make a ball, but not so wet that it drips water. Once the soil is ready, press the potting soil along the sides of the flower pot so that it forms an upside down igloo shape, similar to the diagram below. Make the walls about an inch or so thick. This is the bottom of your toad abode. You can use a bowl to help mold the round "belly" part of the igloo. If the soil is the right consistency, it should hold together well.



To help form the "igloo" shape, press a 1" thick layer of potting soil in the bottom of the flower pot then place a bowl in the center of the pot. Press soil around the bowl until you reach the top of the pot.

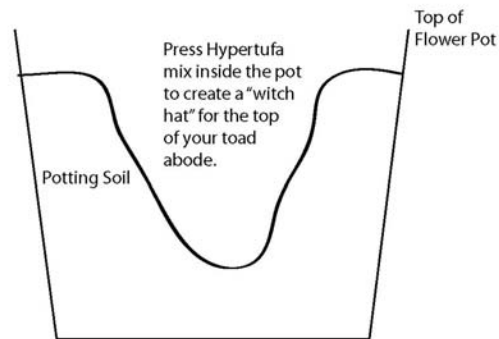
Now you are ready to fill the mold with your hypertufa mix. Mix your favorite hypertufa recipe to a moist consistency so that when you roll it into a ball it holds its shape without crumbling, yet it's not dripping wet. Then take the hypertufa and flatten it into patties approximately 3"-4" in diameter and ½" – 1" thick. Lay the patties in the mold, overlapping slightly,

Courtesy of [www.gardensandcrafts.com](http://www.gardensandcrafts.com)

smoothing the patties into each other as you go along. Do not press too hard as you don't want to make an impression in the potting soil mold that you've made inside the pot.

When you are ready to make the entrance part of the igloo, remember that most toads like an opening of 3"-4" across and about 2" high. Also, the entrance walls can be a little thicker. Mine were about an inch thick. This adds stability as well as allowing you some leeway to make the right size entrance. Set the pot aside in a shady location and let it cure for at least a week before removing the base from the potting soil mold.

Once you are finished with the bottom of your toad abode, you can now work on the top. Again, fill the empty plastic pot with moistened potting soil so that it is in the shape of an upside down witches' hat. But this time, don't bring the potting soil all the way to the top of the pot. This will help create a ledge to form the brim of the hat. The edge can have a wavy pattern like the one in the picture above, or it can be straight across, which is very simple to do. Check out the graphic below to see what I mean.



Mix your hypertufa ingredients as you did before and start by rolling a 1-1/2" ball in your hands, flatten it slightly so that it is at least a 1/2" thick and place it in the tip of your mold. Continue placing larger patties of hypertufa around the inside of the mold until you are finished. The witches' hat needs to sit on top of the igloo so keep those dimensions in mind when making the mold. If you don't like the way it fits, you can always file it down with a metal file before it has fully cured.

Let both molds sit and harden in a shaded location for at least a week before removing them from the molds. If you are experiencing hot weather during this time, mist the pots everyday and lay plastic or burlap loosely on the top of the pots so that it doesn't dry too quickly and crack. After a week, turn the pots upside down, and remove the potting soil with water from the hose and a stiff brush to help loosen it from the hypertufa. File down any sharp edges if needed and place the toad abode in a shady part of the garden where you have seen toads before. Toads like to dig, so a compost rich area is perfect for them.

I hope these instructions will help you create your own toad abode.