TRASH ROCKS -- Eliminate Unrecyclable Trash

by **Thinkenstein** on August 7, 2009

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Intro: TRASH ROCKS -- Eliminate Unrecyclable Trash

To make a trash rock, a sack is first sewn out of fishnet. It is filled with trash and plastered with cement. The resulting shells are unique in shape and look very natural. Trash rocks are an esthetically pleasing and constructive way to eliminate trash.

Trash rocks can be used as benches, tables, sculpture bases, landscape accents, and walls. A family living in one location over time could build a castle out of their trash. I would expect trash rocks to have good thermal insulation, useful in both hot and cold climates.

I'm big into recycling and built my whole house out of recycled nylon fishnet and cement, a material I call nylon-cement. For many years I eliminated all my trash right at home using trash rocks.

Ideally, I would like to see a chemist develop a way to recycle some of our plastic trash and make a mesh material like fishnet out of it that could be plastered with cement.

Recycling is all about mining trash; converting waste into something useful. If we separate our trash first and put it into separate trash rocks we would know where to look for specific recyclable materials in the future when we need them. In the meantime, why not enjoy living around all the trash we generate?

step 1: Scoring the Fishnet

Many years ago I bought new fishnet by mail from a fishnet manufacturer. That seemed fairly expensive at the time; $6 a pound, I believe. I wouldn't be surprised if it is double that now, or more.

Then I found the free fishnet mother load of all time right under my nose, the StarKist tuna factory. They were very helpful to me in saving used fishnet that the boats wanted to get rid of. Discarded netting is a trash disposal problem for the factory, so we helped each other out.

After getting it home, the fishnet was opened out, cleaned off, rolled up and stored outdoors. It smelled "fishy". Given a month or two of exposure to rain and air it was completely user-friendly. Fortunately, I live in the country, where I can do this without offending the noses of neighbors.

Good luck finding a source of your own. Fishing ports and fish farms are good places to start looking for used fishnet. Ready-made trash sacks that can be plastered with cement should be available for this idea to really take off. Sewing your own sacks allows you to make different sizes of trash rocks, but ready-made sacks would save some time and effort.

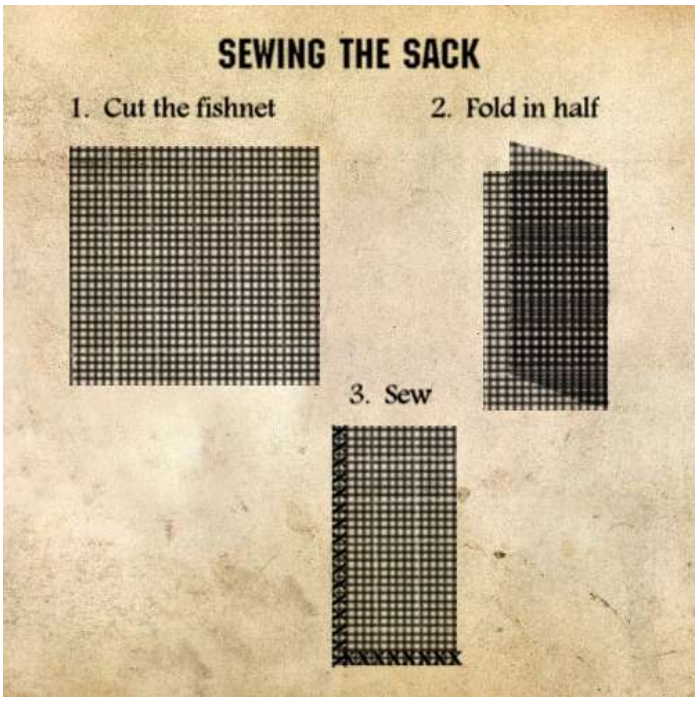
http://agriculture.exportersindia.com/aquaculture/fishing-nets.htm This is a link to manufacturers of fishnet. Most are in the Orient.

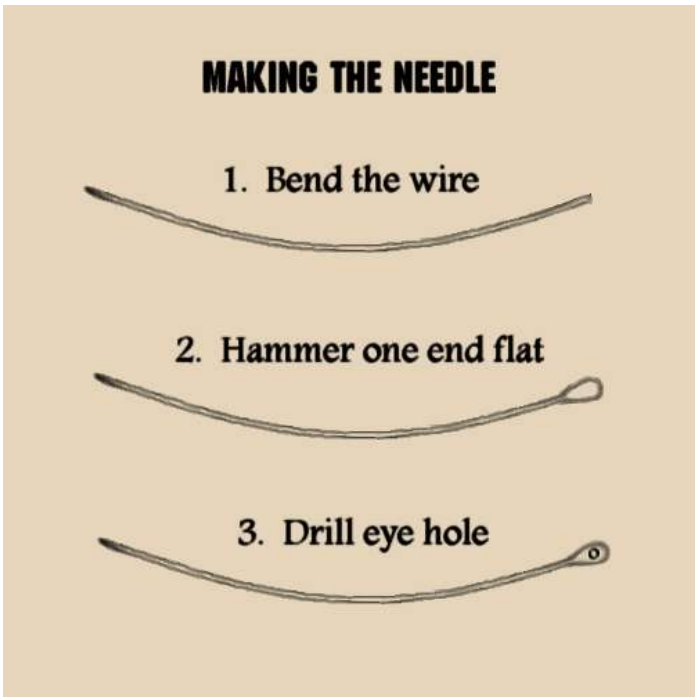
http://www.thomasnet.com/nsearch.html?cov=NA&what=Netting&heading=53680203&navsec=prodsearch A search for "netting" on Thomasnet can come up with U.S. manufacturers.

step 2: Sewing the Sacks

Sew the sacks however big you want your trash rocks to be. I made my own super-sized curved sewing needle out of heavy wire. Hammer one end of the wire flat and drill a hole in it to make the eye of the needle. Make a rounded point at the other end.

I use nylon twine to do the stitching with. When protected from sunlight by the cement, nylon will last a long time.





step 3: Fill the Sack

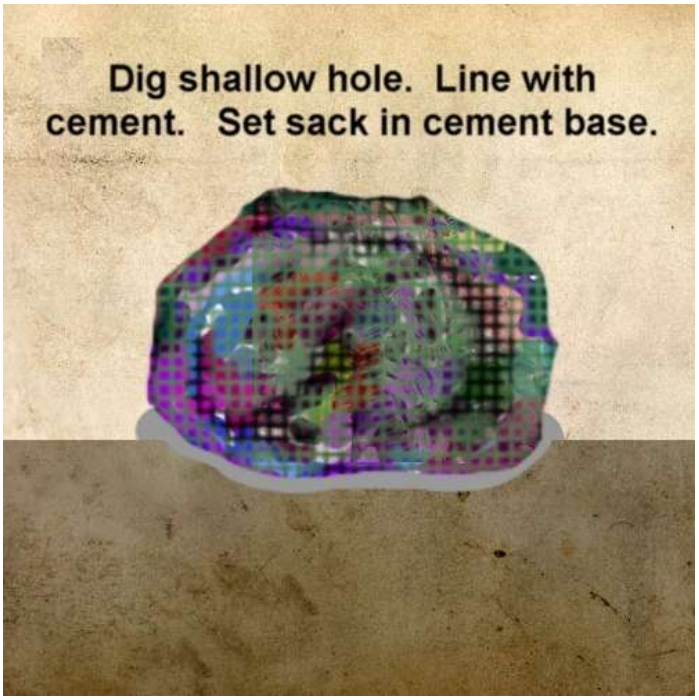
Fill the sack with your trash that nobody wants to recycle. Use twine and the big sewing needle to sew the mouth of the sack closed.

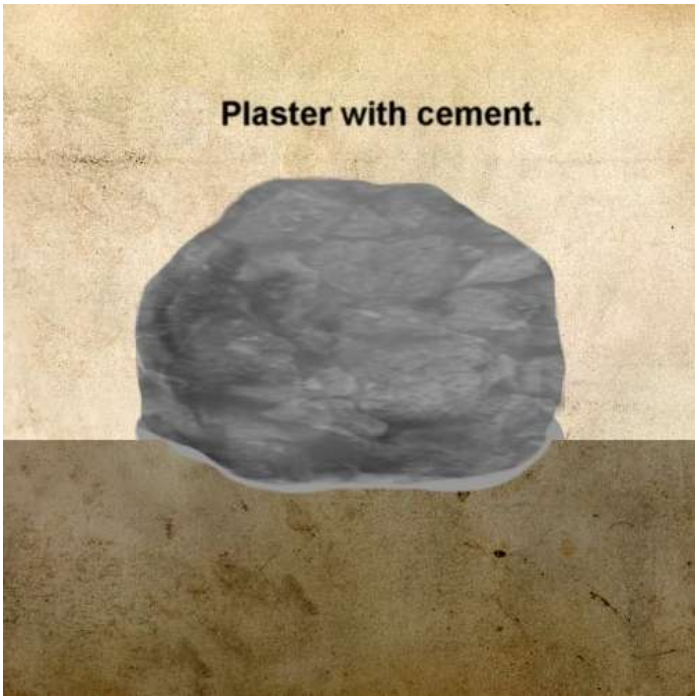
step 4: Site Preparation

Depending on where your trash rock is going, you may have to prepare the site. In order for new cement to stick well to old cement, the old cement has to be clean. A pressure washer works great for cleaning cement. Throw down some cement before placing the trash-filled sack in order to adhere the new rock to the old.

If you are putting the trash rock on the ground, you might want to dig a little nest for the trash rock to sit in. Throw some cement in the hole before setting the sack of trash in it. That gives you some foundation, and might prevent animals from burrowing up into the trash from underneath.

As with building any rock wall, keep in mind how the next row of rocks will sit on the row you are working on. Plan ahead to avoid problems.





step 5: Mixing the Cement

The normal cement mix for plastering is one part cement to three parts sand. 1, 2, 3 is an easy way to remember it.

(The same 1, 2, 3 will help you remember how to mix concrete: one part cement, two parts sand, three parts gravel.)

You can mix small amounts of cement in containers, or in a wheelbarrow. I usually mix a sack at a time on a patio area with a square end shovel.

To do that, mix the dry materials first. Then shape the pile like a volcano and add water to the hole in the middle. Mix it and add more water if needed. Try not to add too much water. It is easier to add more water later than it is to patch up a too juicy mix with more dry material.

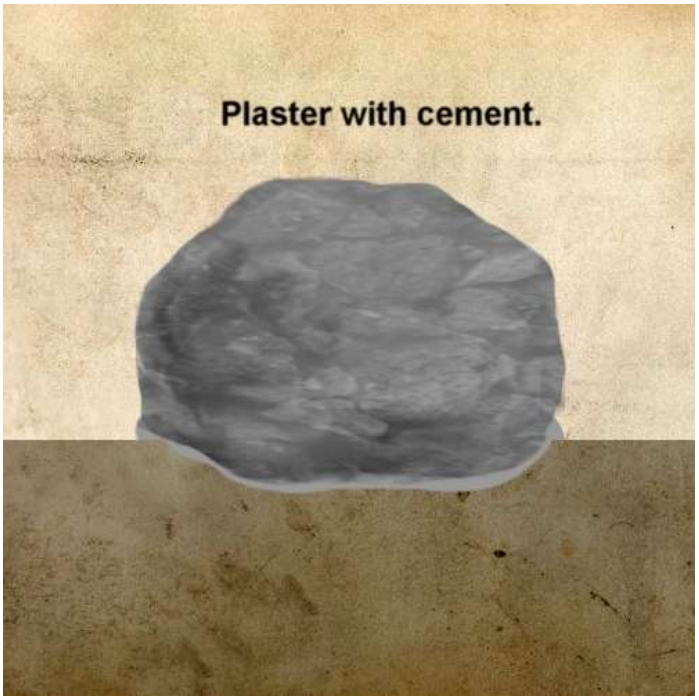
Depending on the size of the mesh of the fishnet you are using, you might want to have the mix be drier or wetter. Larger mesh might accept a drier mix, where a thinner mix would fall through the holes. With fine mesh, you might want a wetter mix for better penetration.

step 6: Plastering the Sack

After dragging the sack of trash to the location you want your rock, and setting it in a bit of cement, the best way to plaster it is usually from the bottom up, with vertical strokes of the trowel, but there are exceptions to every rule.

When you stroke upward, the trowel makes a sort of "V" shaped pocket in which the cement on the trowel rests. If you stroke downward the "V" is upside-down and the cement tends to fall on the ground. After the cement is up, it can be stroked in different directions without much problem.

You might want to brush the surface of the cement after it starts to harden up some, in order to knock off any sharp bumps that might interfere with plastering the next layer, or applying the color coat. Quite often, to get adequate thickness, you have to plaster the rock twice. The second coat is easier, because the first coat is solid at that time.



step 7: Colorizing

Cement can be painted, or colorized by adding pigments to the cement. Paint tends to weather away, chip, and blister. When the pigments are part of the cement, colors are more permanent. Powdered pigments for colorizing cement are available in hardware stores.

Pigments, powdered or liquid, can be added to the cement used in plastering the trash rocks. Pigments cost money, though. Less pigment is used if plastering is done with uncolored cement and a thin layer of colorized cement is then brushed onto the surface. That is what I usually do.

When exposed to sun and rain cement will slowly wear away. The thicker the pigmented layer, the longer it will last. Colorized cement can be brushed on with a broom head or big house brush. One can also fling cement from a brush to create irregular spotty effects.

Exposed to the weather, even un-pigmented cement can become beautifully colorized by nature as algae grows on it.

I haven't colorized any trash rocks yet, but this photo shows colored cement effects on the wall of a house. I added some concrete acrylic fortifier to the cement to hopefully make it more weather resistant.

step 8: Trash Rocks I have known

These are some trash rocks I have made over the years.

Image Notes
1. This area is all filled with trash. It is turning into a seating area, or place to put a mattress to lie down.

Image Notes
1. Styrofoam concrete.
2. My municipality doesn't recycle glass. In a general landfill, it gets broken and makes future recycling of other things more difficult.
3. This "rock" used to be a planter. It uses a plasterable metal mesh called Hi-rib, instead of fishnet.

Image Notes
1. This trash rock is filled with capped plastic containers that hold air. The whole rock can float in water.

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