

Mad on mosaics

Mark Rayner comes up with some suggestions for holiday projects.

If you fancy tackling a mosaic or two over the holidays, here are some ideas to get you going, including one children can tackle and another using their artwork as a starting point.

Child's play

Sometimes a dash of mosaic is all you need. This is a really easy project because there's no need to cut tiles to fit and no need to grout. The colourful mosaic decoration around the top of this terracotta pot was created from glass tiles glued on with exterior PVA. Be sure to seal the whole pot first with Resene Terracotta Sealer. This will help tiles stick and will also keep potting mix more moist in warm weather. Turn the pot upside down before you fix the tiles to stop them slipping as you work.



Flower power

Make a year-round floral display out of a plain, rendered concrete retaining wall. This example incorporates three-dimensional ceramic flowers. Their stems and leaves have been created with flat, coloured tiles and rest of the wall is covered with variations of a different colour. You could use broken china with a bold floral pattern to create a different floral effect.

Fancy a cuppa?

Transform a broken cup and saucer by carefully cutting both in half, using an angle grinder with a tile cutting blade. Then fix them to a piece of exterior plywood with exterior construction glue, leaving a small drainage gap in the cap. When the glue is dry, cover the ply with cut squares of ceramic tiles and finish off with exterior grout.



Simple spheres

Create a colourful sphere like this by first priming a terracotta ball with some Resene Terracotta Sealer.

When this is dry, cover the ball with vitreous glass tiles and when the glue is dry, finish off your sphere with a contrasting pale exterior grout.

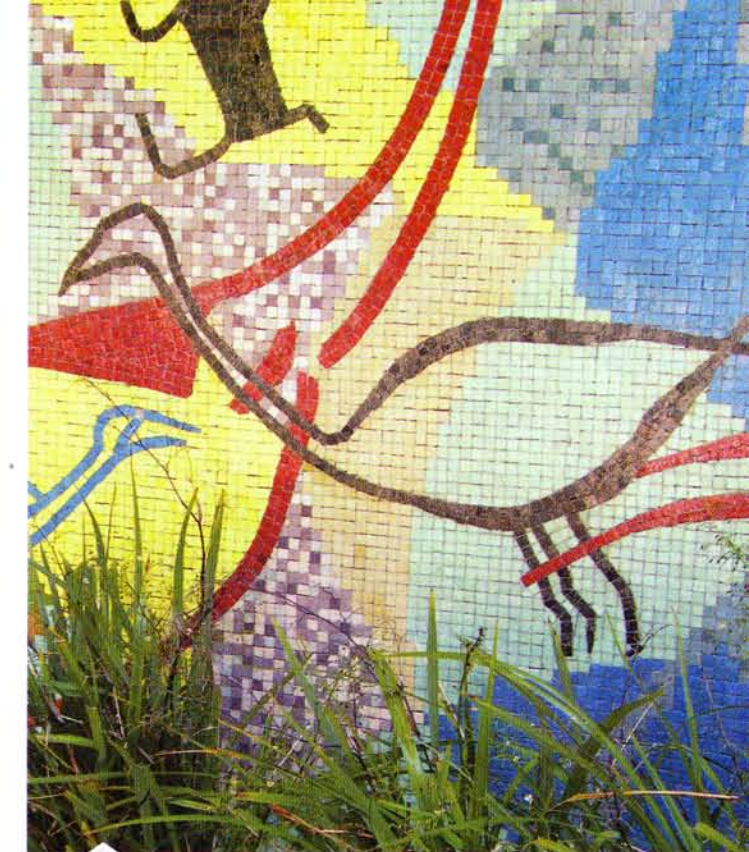
Other interesting materials to use are paua shell, small coloured pebbles or pieces of broken mirror – a great way to brighten up a dark corner of the garden with reflected light.



What glue where?

Most exterior glues can be used for mosaics, but the best glue depends on the surface and mosaic materials.

- Exterior PVA is best for fixing flat tiles, such as vitreous glass or ceramic, on to a flat horizontal surface like a plywood panel. Seal the surface of the panel first with a diluted mix of PVA glue (one part glue to three parts water) and keep the completed mosaic flat until the glue has dried.
- PVA can also be used to stick tiles to terracotta pots, but stand pots upside down on a piece of plastic and work from the rim upwards to prevent tiles from slipping.
- Cement-based tile adhesive is great for sticking mosaic pieces to concrete but don't make the mix too wet or your mosaic pieces will slip, especially if you're working on a vertical surface.
- Exterior construction glue is good for adhering most mosaic pieces to most surfaces but can be a bit messy, so take care not to apply too much, otherwise it can ooze up in the gap between mosaic pieces, spoiling the look when your piece is grouted.



Up the wall

Transform a plain concrete wall into a mosaic masterpiece with vitreous glass mosaic tiles. Draw your design directly on the wall with a heavy pencil or marker pen. Start with the objects in the foreground, positioning a line of tiles to define the outside edges first. Infill with other tiles, following the line of the shape or keep the centre empty to allow the background to show through. Build up background colours with wavy lines of tiles or, in this case, blocks of colour following a grid pattern. Finish off with an exterior tile grout.

One for the kids

You can also get children involved by transforming their drawings into permanent works of art – great presents for proud grandparents. Transfer existing drawings on to exterior plywood using carbon paper or get the kids to draw directly on to the plywood base using a soft pencil or thick marker pen. Let them help choose colours as you create the mosaic panel. Older children can help to position the cut tiles, taking care with sharp edges. Younger children can make their own paper mosaics from small squares of cut coloured paper.

