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EDITOR'S NOTE:

A spiral push drill is a hand-powered drill. Push steadily and gently in an up-and-down manner and take your time; if you press too hard, you may break the bit. If you don't have a spiral push drill, try alternating between a needle tool and a round needle file, or see "Power Tools," p. 24.

Texture stamps for polymer clay

There are four great options for creating texture in polymer clay:

- Purchase commercially available rubber stamps or texture plates
- Make rubber stamps (granthams.com)
- Design "plate and matrix" stamps (readystamps.com)
- Make polymer-clay stamp plates.

This last option requires some practice, but offers immense satisfaction. Since the surface of a clay stamp isn't perfectly even, however, it's easy to lose detail in the finished work. Try a bold pattern like the one shown below; reduce or enlarge the image as you desire. To make your own polymer-clay stamps, follow these directions:

- [1] Roll out 10 oz. (284g) of scrap polymer clay on the thickest pasta machine setting.
- [2] Fold it over to make two 5 x 5-in. (13 x 13cm) sheets of double thickness.

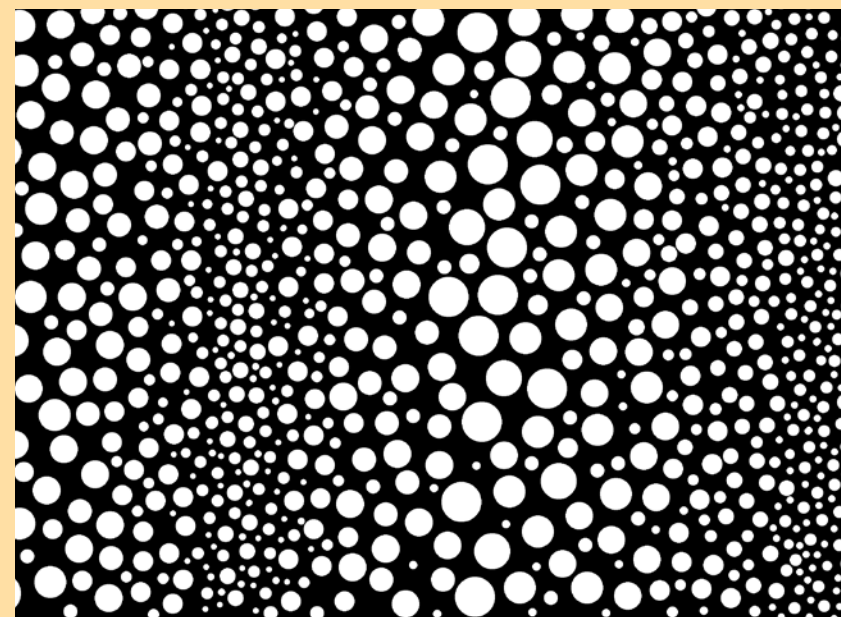
- [3] Cut several holes with small clay cutters. Poke more holes with straws of various sizes, a ball stylus, and other texture tools. Gently smooth all ridges with your fingers, a brayer, or an acrylic rod and make sure that the surface is as evenly flat as possible. Leave some space untextured to carve later.

- [4] Bake the polymer clay at 275°F (135°C) for 30 minutes.

- [5] After the clay cools, use a linoleum cutter to carve additional designs.

TOOLS & SUPPLIES

- 10 oz. (284g) scrap polymer clay
- Kemper or other clay cutters
- ball stylus
- texturing tools (straws, pens, nails, etc.)
- brayer or acrylic rod (optional)
- Speedball linoleum cutter with V blades
- toaster or convection oven dedicated to nonfood use



wheel mounted on a drill press. The wheel used in this project is for buffing cars and is made of polyester rather than cotton. If you use a muslin wheel, choose the unsewn variety.) If you don't have access to power tools or prefer not to use them, you can buff by hand with soft cloths, though you will not achieve the same level of polish.

- [4] Mark where you want the stringing hole, using a pencil or needle tool. With a spiral push drill and a 1/64-in. (.4mm) bit, drill one side and then the other until your holes meet (photo k). See Editor's note, above.

- [5] Using a flex shaft or power drill, enlarge the hole with a 1/32-in. (.8mm) bit. Gradually increase the size of the bit until the hole is 1/8 in. (3mm) or your desired size.

Warring States beads



One of China's ancient bead designs is beautifully re-created in polymer clay

by Lura Hatcher

This polymer-clay version was inspired by glass beadmaker Dan Adams' Warring States beads, which in turn took their inspiration from the original source: ancient China's Warring States glass beads. This remarkable period in China (roughly 481–221 B.C.) was a time of extreme tumult, with many regional warlords struggling to annex smaller states around them and thus rise to power. Despite the chaos, great technological strides were made, including the switch from primitive bronzeworking to more modern

Complex canework

Make exquisite polymer clay canes featuring chrysanthemums

by Sarajane Helm



In ancient Asia, chrysanthemums were grown for food and medicine, but the Chinese began growing them for beauty as early as the 5th century A.D., when a renowned official resigned his post to raise mums in pots. A century later, chrysanthemums were introduced to the Japanese, who applied many of the cultivation techniques they used with bonsai. Before long, the chrysanthemum was so popular that the Japanese Imperial Family – a hereditary monarchy that traces its lineage back to the 6th century B.C. – adopted it as its royal crest. The chrysanthemum is a central motif in Japanese culture, particularly in textiles and art, and this “Emperor of Flowers” translates beautifully to complex canework.

The secret to creating fabulous detail in a cane is to start out large. Only by making enough cane will you be able to manipulate it to form complex patterns such as these chrysanthemum designs.

Start by blending colors and making snakes. Wrap the snakes with highlight colors and combine them into larger canes. Reduce and combine them again until you’ve created the elaborate canes shown here.

Prepare the clay

The petals in these flowers range from dark at the center to light at the outside, with white on the edge of the outermost petals. A touch of gold at the center adds sparkle, and each petal is outlined in black.

Mix three shades of red and three shades of green in dark, medium, and light tones. Don’t make the shades too subtle; the tones should be distinguishable from each other (photo a).



[1] Form a snake about ¾ in. (1.9cm) in diameter and 12 to 18 in. long (30–46cm) with half the dark red clay.

[2] For medium red, add enough white clay to the remaining red to produce a good medium tint and roll it into a snake twice as long as the first one.

[3] Cut 1 in. (2.5cm) of clay off each end of the medium red snake and mix it with enough white to create a much lighter tint. This snake needs to be twice as long as the medium red one. Repeat steps 1–3 with the green clay.

Make leaf canes

[1] Using a pasta machine at a medium setting, make a long sheet of white clay wide enough to wrap around three-fourths of the light red snake’s circumference, leaving red exposed at the bottom. Smooth the pieces together, making sure no air bubbles are trapped between layers (photo b).

[2] Reduce the diameter of this snake until it is the same as the other two.

[3] With the pasta machine at a thinner setting than in step 1, make a thin sheet of black clay wide enough to cover about three-fourths of each snake’s circumference, as in step 1 of this section. Wrap all three snakes in a layer of black, again leaving the bottom uncovered. Don’t worry about

slight imperfections (photo c).

[4] Roll the light green clay into a snake about the diameter of your thumb. Cut lengthwise through the snake to make two half-circles.

[5] With the pasta machine at the same setting as step 1, make long sheets of dark and medium green clay. To make the vein, cut the dark green sheet into a 1-in.-wide (2.5cm) strip as long as the light green snake and sandwich it between the two half-circles of light green.

[6] Trim away the excess. Use the medium green sheet to wrap the leaf cane completely (photo d).

Make chrysanthemum canes

[1] Lightly pinch the bottoms of the dark, medium, and light red snakes to create a teardrop (or petal) shape, with the bottom of the teardrop displaying the petal color.

[2] Cut the dark red snake into six equal lengths about 2 to 3 in. (5–7.6cm) each. Use one of these as a guide for cutting the medium red snake. Cut as many pieces of equal length as you can, reducing the snake slightly to increase its length if necessary.

[3] Cut the light red snake in half, set one half aside, and cut the other into pieces as in step 2.

[4] Roll a ⅜-in. (1cm) snake of gold clay for the center. Cut the gold snake