

Community Mosaics



Colorado communities are colorful mosaics of people and cultures, families and lifestyles. What may seem like a lone shard of glass or garden-variety stone needs only to be connected to a network of colorful tiles to shine. We are building places across our state where parents, families, friends and neighbors come together to create beautiful masterpieces. The idea of community mosaics is about bringing people together to contribute to building beautiful communities and neighborhoods one piece at a time, one person at a time. Get connected with a community mosaic project.

THE BENEFITS OF MOSAIC PROJECTS

Creating mosaics with can help improve their self-esteem through empowerment, motivation, ownership, and inclusion.

Working together on a mosaic project improves teamwork, connections and communication.

METHODS AND FORMS OF MOSAICS

There are several ways this form of art can build community between adults, children and neighborhood members:

- Mosaic Wall
- Mosaic Tables
- Mosaic Bird Baths
- Garden Mosaic Stepping Stones
- Seed Mosaic Planter (various seeds and beans can create mosaic patterns to beautify terracotta flowerpots.)
- Mosaic Flower Mandala (Mandala means a "sacred circle" and can be created using natural plant materials in the garden.)

SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR DIY MOSAIC ART:

1. **MOSAIC BASE:** Choose a surface on which your mosaic is rigid and strong enough to hold the weight of stones and plaster. Examples of bases for mosaics include walls, table surfaces, picture frames, glass windows, or metal sheets for wall art. Use weather-resistant concrete or terracotta pots for outdoor mosaics, but make sure to add a protective sealant.
2. **TESSERAE:** The small pieces of mosaic designs are called tesserae, and an individual piece is called a tessera. You can use hard, non-porous objects in different colors such as glass, stones, shells, ceramic, seeds or smalti, which are specialized mosaic tiles. You can buy round glass gems from a hardware store or craft store to avoid handling broken pieces of glass.
3. **CUTTER:** Use a hammer, tile nipper, or glass cutter to cut down shards of glass and tiles.
4. **ADHESIVE:** Use an adhesive to adhere the tesserae to the base, typically a mortar made from cement. Your adhesive will depend on the materials of your base and if you plan to display the mosaic indoors or outdoors. Use a water-resistant adhesive, such as a thin-set mortar, for outdoor mosaics. Epoxy resins work well on metal pieces, and acrylic-based adhesives work best for slippery materials, such as glass or ceramic.
5. **GROUT:** You must grout the mosaic pieces to hold it all together. You can use colored grout or paint the grout after it dries.
6. **SEALANT:** Add a bond to your finished piece to protect the mosaic from damage. For outdoor mosaics, polyurethane works best.
7. **GLOVES:** Wear gloves to protect your hands from sharp edges and glue.
8. **SAFETY GLASSES:** Be sure to wear safety glasses if you're crushing or cutting glass or other hard objects.
9. **SPATULA:** You'll need a spatula to apply the glue and grout to your mosaic.
10. **SPONGE:** Use a sponge to wipe off excess glue and grout.

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HOW TO MAKE MOSAIC ART IN 7 STEPS:

Working on a flat surface is the easiest way for beginners to create mosaic art. Follow these steps to make a mosaic:

1. **PREP YOUR MATERIALS.** Clean off any debris from your mosaic base and tesserae pieces. Cover your work surface in newspaper or plastic to protect other surfaces from the mess, and be sure to work in a well-ventilated area.
2. **CREATE YOUR DESIGN.** The more complex your design, the smaller your tesserae will need to be. Sketch your design onto a piece of paper and transfer it to the base using transfer paper, or use a marker to draw your design onto the base.
3. **LAY THE TESSERAE ONTO THE BASE.** Configure the tesserae onto the base, and use a glass cutter to cut down glass and a tile nipper to cut ceramic tiles or broken china to fit the design.
4. **APPLY THE ADHESIVE.** Put a bond over your entire design or apply the glue to each piece before placing them on the base. Many professional mosaic artists place the tesserae in a mold before pouring concrete on top, or glue the mosaic onto the base and then flip the mosaic over. This indirect method ensures a smooth surface.
5. **WAIT FOR THE ADHESIVE TO SET.** After gluing down the tiles, wait for the adhesive to set, which will take a couple of hours. Wipe off the excess glue after it is dry. Wait for the glue to dry before grouting—this will take around 24 hours, depending on the type of adhesive.
6. **APPLY THE GROUT.** Using a spatula, apply grout onto the entire mosaic and spread it evenly, so the grout enters every crevice. Wait for the grout to set, about 20 minutes. Wipe the excess grout off the surface of the tesserae using warm water. If the grout has hardened too much to remove, use a non-scratch nylon scouring pad. Wait 24 hours for the grout to fully cure before proceeding to the next step.
7. **ADD A PROTECTIVE SEALANT.** You may need to apply multiple layers if the mosaic is outdoors or if it will be frequently handled, such as a tabletop. After the sealant dries, you can then admire your beautiful mosaic.

RESOURCES / BOOKS:

Stepping Stone Mosaics: 32 Ideas for Making Garden Stones by Kindra Werner

Garden Mosaics: 19 Beautiful Mosaic Projects For Your Garden by Emma Biggs and Tessa Hunkin

Encyclopedia Of Mosaic Techniques: A Step by step Visual Directory, With An Inspirational Gallery Of Finished Works by Emma Biggs