

Natural Wall Finish Recipes

Clay Paint (Alis)

Uses: Interior

Type: Thin layers of stabilized clay slip

Substrate: Plastered walls, drywall, other surfaces

Performance: Creates a wall surface that is much more pleasing than the rubberized surface of many modern paints

Step 1: Make a starch paste

- Add 1 part white flour to 2 parts cold water and set aside
- Boil 1 1/2 parts water. When boiling, add the above mixture of flour and cold water. Turn heat to low, continue to cook until the mixture thickens while continually stirring the bottom to prevent burning.

Step 2: Make the paint

- Dilute every 1 part starch paste with 2 parts water to make paste liquid enough to add other ingredients.
- Add colored clay or white kaolin clay with pigments to achieve a consistency that will spread easily with a brush, looks like it will cover in two coats and is the consistency of thick cream. Mica can be added to simulate clays that have naturally occurring mica. Fine screened, chopped straw can also be added. If adding either or both, add less clay because the mica and straw will thicken the mix.

Step 3: Application

- Apply with a brush, and while the paint has set but is still moist, use a damp tile sponge to polish the surface, removing excess dust and revealing the straw and mica. A plastic lid with the edges cut off can also be used as a flexible scraper to further polish the surface.

Clay and Sand Plaster

Uses: Interior, or exterior when stabilized or coated in linseed oil

Type: Finish coat

Substrate: Earth plaster, or other materials if bonding glues such as starch or casein are added

Ingredients:

- 1 part clay
- 2-3 parts sand
- 0-1/2 part straw
- **Note:** Proportions may vary depending on the type of clay used, but the objective is to get enough clay mixed in with the sand or straw to prevent cracking due to excessive shrinking. The amount of clay needed can be gauged by checking if the mixture will stick to a metal trowel held perpendicularly to the ground. If it does stick, do not add any more sand or straw to the plaster or it will lose plasticity.

Application:

- Apply with a trowel evenly on the wall and screen the excess off. Fill in low plaster areas with additional mix and use a wood or foam float in a gentle, circular motion until the plaster begins to compact. Let the plaster rest and when some of the moisture has been absorbed, use the metal trowel again to smooth it out.

Straw Clay Plaster

Uses: Sculpting, or as a thick, first plaster coat

Type: Base

Substrate: Bare bales, or smooth materials such as Gyproc

Performance: Water resistant in mild climates and wears gradually; needs stabilization or protection for exterior

Recipe:

- Proportions vary depending on the type of clay. High clay soils will typically require additional sand, which can range from 0-1/2 part sand per part of clay. Proportions of straw will vary from 4-5 parts per part of clay.

Application:

- Apply to a thickness of 1/2"- 1 1/2". When drier, it can be applied more thickly and used to fill out deeper areas.

- **Precaution:** Too much water will make the mix misleading in terms of binding quality. Letting the mix sit for a day or more will improve it.

Alternative Joint Compound Mix

Uses: Interior

Type: Thin mix for sealing joints and covering nails before plastering or painting over

Substrate: Drywall, or other hard substrate

Performance: Will tolerate much more burnishing and polishing than straight clay

Recipe:

- 1 part clay, screened through 40 or 80 mesh, or obtained as fine powdered clay from a ceramic supplier
- 1/2 to 1 part chalk
- 1 part starch paste to 2 parts water
- Mix the dry and wet ingredients to the consistency of a joint compound and apply as needed.

Lime Wash

Uses: Coloring and finishing

Type: Thin layers with brush

Substrate: Finishing walls, ceilings and even floors of animal shelters

Performance: Mould-inhibiting

Recipe:

- Mix the powdered hydrated lime with water, and stir well until it has the consistency of thick cream. Allow to sit for as long as possible, from several hours to days.

Application:

- Apply with a wide coarse brush by laying the paint on evenly without going back over areas. Work vertically, let dry, and then work horizontally. If applied too thickly, it will peel or dust off. Leftover lime can be stored in plastic or glass containers for use at a later date.