

Welcome to spring, and to all our subscribers, both new and old!

Spring is my favorite season, with fall coming in a close second. Perhaps it's because I am no fan of seasonal extremes, like 110 degrees F in the shade, or ten below zero F. Perhaps it's because I'm a gardener, and I can garden most comfortably in both spring and fall. For whatever reason, I am gearing up for a new year for the garden and flowerbeds, and in my clay studio as well. The only difference is, this year I am thinking of growing things that would make good digital photograph subjects and inspiration for clay designs.

Keep those cards and letters coming, folks. Without your questions, I could be out of a job!

We welcome this mail from Jeff:

*Help,*

*I'm a stroke survivor who's looking to fill in some of my time. The stroke has reduced my fine motor skills, but I'm willing to try almost anything. I've been investigating things a bit and polymer clay molding is one of them. I could possibly make things and my 10 year old daughter could paint them! Before I spend some money only to find out that I can't do it moderately well I have a few questions that maybe you could answer for me.*

*1) Is polymer clay workable til you bake it? As I said earlier my motor skills aren't up to snuff so to speak so if I have a little "oops" before baking is it possible for me to re-work it. I.e. if you have a mistake working with wood the result is kindling. Is polymer clay like that?*

*2) What do you **really** need to start? Living on a disability pension, I don't have a lot of disposable income.*

*3) I enjoy making things with wood and have a fully stocked shop as a result (from before my accident). My question is if you make your own sculpting tools, is there anything special that needs to be done?*

*4) I was in a craft shop near here and asked if you needed a release agent on the molds you can get and from my standpoint the number of molds is almost limitless.*

*That's it for now. Thanking you in advance.*

*Jeff*

Well, Jeff, there is lots of good news to be had!

First off, polymer clay **is** workable 'til you bake it. Not only that, but it comes in a rainbow of colors and doesn't necessarily need to be painted! You can re-shape and refine your sculpting right up until you put it in the oven! There are artists out there who have canes they made several years ago, and (after a bit of judicious warming) the canes remain workable still.

If you should mess something up so badly it can't be salvaged as sculpture, you can use it as "mud" clay for the insides of beads, or for a bottom layer on a multi-layered piece. There is never any need to throw out polymer clay, unless it's been partially cured and will not soften. Even then, you can grate it with a grater from a second-hand store (dedicate your tools to clay, and don't use them in the kitchen anymore). For instance, grated black clay makes great flecks for use in faux turquoise, or granite.

More good news is that you don't need a studio full of tools for polymer clay. You will find that your hands are your best tools, and other easily found items are just perfect for this wonderful medium! Toothpicks can be used for drilling holes in beads or fine detail work in sculpts; typing paper for baking on and for covering items that may brown in the oven; a wooden dowel can be used to flatten the clay into sheets, and the list goes on. You will be limited only by your imagination!

Making your own sculpting tools is a great idea. I bought some brass tubing at a hobby shop and intend to cut and shape it to make mini carving tools, since I couldn't find any in my area that were small enough. I have made my own needle tool by making a clay handle for large, strong needle, and I have used round stick pens as mini rolling pins, to get into some of those small areas where a large one wouldn't fit.

My advice would be to make sure the tool part was secure in its clay handle. This can be done by making the handle, then baking it separately from the tool end. Make sure you have made a hole in the handle so the working end can fit, and then after the handle is cooled, just slip the tool end in with some gap-filling instant glue (such as Zap-A-Gap), let the glue cure, and you should be all set!

You're right, there are a **lot** of molds out there, and some of the newer ones don't even require a release! One of the most popular mold releases used by polymer clay artists is cornstarch. A light dusting is all that's required. I have used a quick spritz of water with great success, and others use a quick spray of ArmorAll. And yes, I **have** used the new molds that say they don't need a release. They released the clay with nary a problem.

Polymer clay is also an excellent medium for making molds. You can make impressions of anything that strikes your fancy, and once the mold is cured, you can use it over and over.

Good luck, and be sure to send us pictures of your work! Just send it to [polyzine@pcpolyzine.com](mailto:polyzine@pcpolyzine.com).

Fay was wondering this month, too:

*Is there liquid clay? What does it do and what is it used for?*

Well Fay, you have hit the jackpot, because there **is** a liquid clay, and awesome stuff it is, indeed!

It's called Translucent Liquid Sculpey, and it's great stuff. It comes in both white and untinted. It's great for transfers, for marbling and polymer clay "painting" and for use as a topcoat. It is also a great adhesive for raw to baked clay, and raw clay to raw. It is very useful for adhering small pieces to larger pieces, and it cures very strong. Its adhesive properties don't show up until its baked, though, so remember to support unbaked pieces that you are "gluing" with TLS.

I would suggest a visit to [Diane Black's Glass Attic](#) for more information and links to TLS projects.

Most of the online clay suppliers now carry it, and if you're lucky, a crafts store in your neighborhood may have it, as well.

I would suggest reading up on what can be done with it, and find a project that you would like to do. The more you do, the more you will come up with ideas for new uses, too! One of my favorite things was to take wooden beads (cut from a taxi driver's second-hand beaded seat cover) and dip them into water marbled with tinted TLS. I think the list could go on and on....Experiment, and **enjoy!**

I will see you for May Day! Have a great month

Deborah