

## BRICKS, STONES, AND TREES

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Bricks --

The most innovative Fake brick solution I have seen was to paint untempered masonite black (or white) or whatever color you deem the mortar necessary to be and then lay down a grid of 1/2" wide masking tape in the shape of your favorite brick mortar style (stack, common, running, etc.) Next take your handy 5 Gallon bucket of JC (joint compound) and using a mixing attachment in your drill, add red paint to achieve your brick color. Apply the JC to the painted masonite approx 1/4" thick and distress with black spray or what have you. allow the JC to skin, but not harden. Remove your tape grid and you have interestingly sculpted bricks for about \$20 for a 4x8 sheet.

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I did some faux stone work using flat sheets of foam, carved to indicate the individual stones and then added pieces of cheese cloth or butter muslin or an old cut up scrim that was adhered with a watered down glue mix. Add a lite coat of plaster for strength or just paint over when the cloth dried.

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Use blue foam mounted on a 1"x 4" "hollywood style" frame (I also covered the framework with 1/4" lauan for added strength, you might not want that due to the added weight). I also spattered the foam with lacquer thinner to pit the surface of the foam for a rough stone look. The lacquer thinner chemically reacts with the foam and melts it giving off noxious fumes, so outside with all the proper precautions should be taken. I then covered everything with a layer of cheesecloth, then coated it with a white glue and water mix that was the consistency of skim milk. A good paint job, and it looked real from 3 feet.

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Here's another method - We used panels of 1" gray foam (Dow, I think) and cartooned the stones in with felt marker. Then, IN A WELL VENTILATED AREA, a soldering gun was used to trace the stones and make mortar lines. After that, a heat gun (like a hair dryer on steroids) was used to shape and contour the stones - it didn't take much: with a little practice, depressions and bulges were formed by holding the gun about 6" from the foam surface for a few seconds. It also worked nicely to soften and round the edges. Once the stones were all the desired shape, the entire panel was covered with Rosco foam coat, which we tinted with scene paint to make our mortar color. When that dried, two "stone" colors (one light, one dark) were sponge painted on. The results were excellent, although the high-traffic areas of the set required frequent touchups and repairs.

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I have had success skinning faux trees with burlap soaked in white glue. More durable than papier-mâché, and gives you a really good bark like texture. Plus, if somebody kicks it, it won't crumble, and if you pick the right color of burlap, you save on paint.

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We built our trees out of a simple frame of wood and chicken wire, taped newspaper and muslin stripped from old flats onto that, and sprayed it with Moore Products' two part foam. The final result was quite convincing, easy to move and amazingly strong. If you have people climbing the tree for your production, you might build a ladder into the framework, and coat the foam where the actors will be in contact with the surface with something like foam coat from Rosco.