



## Paper Mache Termite Mound

Adapted from instructions submitted for the Hose2Habitat Enrichment Contest 2016.

Winner: Dealers' Choice Category

Permission for publication and use granted by Emily Bowling, Saint Louis Zoo



### General Information:

Any animal that does not live in or near a lot of water can use the termite mound, for example anteaters, mongoose, and primates. Termite mounds can be made as large or as small as you want them to be. They are used to encourage foraging, destruction, and investigation, and can be used as shelter. These termite mounds can be moved to different locations in an enclosure, moved from one enclosure to another (for example, used for foraging or shelter by one species, then moved to carnivores for destruction where prior species use created scent enrichment).

### Safety Concerns:

- Some species or individuals may try to consume parts of the paper mache.
- Choose appropriately sized tubes and boxes to guard against entrapment risks.
- Wet paper mache can get moldy if not allowed to dry properly, so let the mound dry completely between layers. Hair dryers and fans can speed up this process.
- Get veterinary approval to use all ingredients.
- Don't save flour mix. It goes bad quickly, even when refrigerated.
- If PVC is used for tubes, they will not dissolve and will need to be considered when presenting the termite mound to a species/an individual.

### Items Needed:

Tarp  
Flour  
Salt  
Access to hot water  
Bowls for paper mache mix  
Mulch or wood shavings (optional)

Newspaper  
Corrugated cardboard  
Various sized boxes  
Various sized cardboard or PVC tubes  
Tempera paint



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## Step 1

Remove tape, labels, staples, etc. from boxes.



## Step 2

Make "peeled corrugated cardboard tape". This is a safe alternative to regular tape and is strong, is not pliable or porous, and can be ripped or cut. To make, soak corrugated cardboard pieces until saturated, then peel front and back away from the middle corrugation layer. Lay front and back pieces out to dry. (The corrugation layer can be used for other projects.)





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### Step 3

Make paper mache mix by vigorously stirring the following together until lumps are gone:

2 cups flour

3 cups hot water

Pinch (~tsp) of salt (optional)

### Tips:

Salt is optional, but will help prevent mold.

Hot water dissolves the salt and eliminates lumps faster.

More flour will strengthen the mix, but will make the drying time longer and add weight.

Less flour makes a lighter termite mound, but increases the risk of structural breakdown.

### Step 4

Use peeled corrugated cardboard tape (made in step 2) and paper mache mix (made in step 3) to connect various sized boxes and create the general shape of the mound. Measure and cut holes and insert tubes. Seal the end of each tube so that enrichment items placed in the tubes do not fall out.





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### Step 5

To fill out the shape of the termite mound, ball up newspaper, dip one side into the paper mache mix, and stick the wet side of the ball to mound. Continue, working from the bottom up. Let this layer dry completely, then cover the newspaper balls with peeled corrugated cardboard tape strips to smooth out and add strength to the termite mound.

It may help to put paper towels, bright colored paper, colored rags, or some other visual aid into the termite mound tubes so as not to accidentally paper mache or mulch over the tubes. These visual aids will be removed when the mound is complete or after paint and texture are added (step 5).

Note: The picture on the left is the inside of a termite mound made for educational purposes. Use peeled corrugated cardboard tape strips, as shown in the picture on the right, instead of masking tape for animal use.

### Step 6

When the layers from step 5 are dry, paint and add texture. Make a mixture of mulch, flour, and paint in a large container. (It's messy!) The consistency should be similar to pancake batter. Rub the mixture over the mound, being careful not to get it in the tubes. Allow to dry completely. The more mulch (or shavings) that you add to the termite mound, the stronger and heavier it will be.

### Step 7

Add food items or other enrichment to tubes in termite mound and watch animals enjoy!





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