

Smoothing With Sand, Even-ing with Equisetum by storm

Who among us hasn't cleaned our camp pots with some local variety of Scouring-Rush, also know as Horsetail? Widely abundant in wet areas, *Equisetum hyemale* incorporates silica (among other abrasive minerals, such as gold—prospectors used to eyeball this plant for the tell-tale signs of a motherlode) within its tissues. Perhaps this thwarts herbivores from consuming it. Young, peeled shoots are edible to humans, though...

I want to share with you some simple sanders and grinders one can make with natural resources.

While I was exploring the Baking-Hot-Pit-of-Mojave-Desert-Death, I stumbled across some fine black sand. It proved to be almost as abrasive as red garnet-rich sand that Jeff Gottlieb sent me from New York. Under a microscope, one can see wondrous gems that cover nearly the whole spectrum of rainbow colors!

I applied this black sand to a rock using deer hide glue! Use as one would sandpaper...



Equisetum hyemale (Horsetail)

The top length sports a fertile, spore-bearing tip. You can also see the white, reduced leaves (a result of evolutionary processes) and the black internodes. Much like bamboo, under the black lines lay a wall that divides the inner stem into segments.



To create an abrasive horsetail patch:

1. cut within the internodes
2. flatten the rolled-up segments with your fingers
3. press between two flat rocks
4. wait a few days until dry



Effectiveness on wood...



I bet there would have been no complaints about Cavewoman's fingernails if she would have invented one of these! I slapped a horsetail patch onto a piece of fire-shaped Yellow Cedar (affixed with deer hide glue) and saved my fingers some friction blisters via the easier grip.



Some excellent sanders and smoothers for light or finishing work. Note that the red-sand sander has been used to shape the ends of a hand drill spindle. Deer hide glue seems to be destined for more delicate work in the realm of primitive sandpaper. Perhaps tree pitch is sturdier.



There are other fine paleolithic uses for Horsetail, like this Pan Flute. But that's a subject for another time...

[go to www.hollowtop.com/Articles/Horsetail_Pan_Flute.htm to see my article on this]

