



# VERTI-CRETE NEWS

*"The Evolution of Precasting"*

## Special Interest Articles:

- Precast In Paradise
- A Custom Mold Design To Fit Local Traditions
- Developers Using Verti-Crete As A Sales Tool

## Individual Highlights:

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## Wiki Wiki Walls Finds Paradise in Precast

In a state renowned for its gorgeous landscapes, precast concrete walls might not be the first local object of beauty that comes to mind. But for Wiki Wiki Walls, a Honolulu-based company, nothing could be more attractive.

### An Opportunity and a Challenge in Local Traditions

Residential walls are a staple in this tropical culture. Nearly every home, regardless of size, is bordered with a wall to provide privacy, security, sound absorption, and as Grant Wartena, Wiki Wiki Walls founder and Verti-Crete licensee explains, "An aesthetic that hearkens to the state's heritage." Wartena is referring to a traditional style of wall created from indigenous materials such as lava and coral cemented together into thick, sturdy structures that taper at the top.

A homebuilder by trade, Wartena continuously received requests from clients to add a wall



around the new homes he was constructing. However, he quickly got a sense of the challenges that building these walls presented.

"We're talking about gigantic rocks that have to be trenched in, hefted on top of each other, and cemented in. This is tough work—and dangerous too. It's common for a strap to break and rocks to fall. I was always concerned about one of my guys getting hurt."

In addition, creation of these rock walls was a slow process—up to 3 to 5 months for a single residence. "It added a

lot of time to my project," commented Wartena. He noted, "People don't want workers hanging around for months."

### Looking for a Lava Alternative

It's not surprising that Wartena was intrigued when he heard about Verti-Crete precast wall systems from the mainland. "The concept was right," he says, "but I needed something that fit the look of Hawaii." Hopeful, he picked up the phone to inquire if a lava rock pattern was available. It was not, but he was pleasantly surprised

with Verti-Crete's immediate offer to help customize the texture he wanted.

Wartena began collaborating with Verti-Crete artisans to develop an authentic look for the wall, right down to the size and placement of stones. When the team was ready to take impressions of the lava for the molds they ran into a wall themselves. Exporting lava off the islands is illegal. There was no way to get Hawaiian rocks to the manufacturing facility in Utah. What could have been a dead end turned into a road for creativity. Verti-Crete researched lava flows on the mainland and was able to locate rocks with similar textures—even trucking in lava stone from Idaho volcanic fields.

### Customization through Collaboration

With rocks in hand, Verti-Crete laid out the molds, but instead of going to production right away they invited Wiki Wiki Walls to come out and inspect the pattern. "The molding shop was incredibly professional," says Wartena. "When we saw the original mold,

we wanted to adjust some things to make it more authentic looking. Verti-Crete was very happy to adapt. I was impressed that they weren't concerned about how *they* wanted it to look—they trusted that we knew what our customers wanted. The design got better each time we saw it. Now the presentation looks so much like a traditional wall, and people can't tell the difference."

Customization is nothing new to Verti-Crete. The company has developed other wall patterns to complement the local architecture and environment in which the walls are placed—from split-block limestone in the Great Lakes area, to stucco for southwest regions. Development of the custom lava molds took about 60 days from start to finish. Now Wiki Wiki Walls employs the custom lava mold created by Verti-Crete to produce several different looks through staining.

*"This is a fun business to be in. People get excited and can't believe we did their wall so fast and that it looks so good."*

Their customers can choose from many different looks: three coral, two moss rock, and one blue rock—colors all corresponding to local Hawaiian rock wall styles.

The walls are so authentic looking that Wartena was able to build onto an existing stone wall using his precast Verti-Crete panels. "We matched the customer's wall exactly. They literally couldn't tell where the new concrete wall began, which made them insanely happy."

### Beauty in the Look, Price, and Delivery

A part of this success is due to Wiki Wiki Walls' attention to custom colors. The company mixes its own stains to match connecting walls or other walls nearby.

"We are very conscientious about painting our walls, and we spend more time than other producers might to achieve realistic lava or coral looks," says Wartena. "Our costs are higher than some alternatives, but we're still able to beat the price of a traditional rock wall."

In Honolulu, rock walls sell at an average cost of \$150-250 per lineal foot. Wiki Wiki Walls creates the same look in precast at just \$90-\$100 per lineal foot. If that's not enough to thrill customers, the installation time certainly is. Typically, several hundred feet of Verti-Crete wall can be installed per day. Most jobs can be completed within just a few days; a far cry from the three to five months required for rock and mortar.





### Advantages Beneath the Surface

Two emerging benefits of Verti-Crete walls were some Wartena hadn't anticipated. First, the porous nature of real coral and lava makes traditionally constructed walls prone to infestation by insects and rodents. This in turn leads to faster deterioration of the structure. Because precast walls are solid, infestation and the associated crumbling is not an issue and this thrills local customers.

In addition, many residences in Hawaii are built close to heavily trafficked roads. Sturdy walls are a conscious effort to protect homes from accidents and wayward vehicles. Wartena recounts an incident in which a car

ran head-on into a wall. "It did crack our precast wall, but I bet it would have gone through a CMU or other type. When the owner called us we were able to install a new panel and have it repainted within four hours—that's unheard of."

Unheard of, perhaps, but word about precast walls is certainly getting around. "The need for this type of solution is gigantic here," says Wartena. "We're not relying solely on huge developments. Our typical job is small: 120 to 300 feet. We get in, get out, and our customers love it. We've had great success."

### A Business Growing Like its Surroundings

Wiki Wiki Walls reported \$410,000 in sales during its first five months as a Verti-Crete licensee. At time of publication, the company expects to garner the same sales during one month alone. Already averaging six bid requests a day, Wiki Wiki Walls plans to expand its services to the big island of Hawaii immediately and to Maui within six months.

Although Wartena bought the Verti-Crete license to support his residential construction business,

his focus is now on precast. "This business is blooming; it's something that really is of the future. I believe this precast concept is one of the changes that will make a difference in the way the construction industry will work."

Wiki Wiki Walls recently purchased its own concrete batching equipment so the company is not dependent on any ready-mix companies for its concrete supply. Wartena's plans for growth include expanding into more commercial wall applications.

Wartena finds personal satisfaction from the business beyond the financial return. "This is a fun business to be in. People get excited and can't believe we did their

wall so fast and that it looks so good. We're in a place where building space is limited and homes are literally just 10-15 feet apart, but people still tell me, 'you've created a castle for us.'" And that's a true concept of paradise, indeed.

### Further Information

Wiki Wiki Walls is located in Honolulu, Hawaii and will soon expand into the Big Island and Maui. Their work focuses on residential installations including privacy and perimeter walls, architectural columns, gates and decorative elements.

For more information, contact Wiki Wiki Walls at (808) 343-1176 or [www.wikiwikiwalls.com](http://www.wikiwikiwalls.com)





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## A Sign of the Times

Developers are catching on to the value Verti-Crete privacy fences add to their projects. The rich, stately appearance will set an upscale tone for the area and inspire confidence in the homes that will follow.

On the right is a project by one such developer in Arizona who proudly suggests to would-be buyers..."If you like the fence...you will love our homes!"



### About Verti-Crete...

Verti-Crete, LLC is the leading producer of vertically poured precast wall and post systems. Our patent-pending system design outperforms traditional cast methods by dramatically improving product quality and functionality while actually reducing production and installation costs.

Verti-Crete's mold and form systems produce beautiful, seamless, double-sided commercial grade walls and posts. Made from pre-cast concrete, they have the look and feel of real stone. Produce more square feet in less space and less time.

Standard privacy wall systems come in 4', 6', 8' or 10' high by 12' long. Commercial sound wall systems, including pre-stress enabled, can be designed to your specifications.

For more information on how you can license and purchase your Verti-Crete system, please contact us at 801-571-2028 or visit us at [www.verticrete.com](http://www.verticrete.com).

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