



VERTI-CRETE NEWS

"THE EVOLUTION OF PRECASTING"

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Stucco's Surprising Success

When Rick Sowinski of Associated Construction Products (ACP) asked Verti-Crete to produce a stucco-patterned liner for his form system, the owners of Verti-Crete couldn't help being surprised. From the beginning, Verti-Crete's success has been fueled by their ability to produce realistic-looking stone patterns, so it seemed like something of a step back to produce a pattern as plain as stucco. In reality, though, the stucco pattern has been very successful across the nation since Sowinski asked for that first set of stucco panels, and in hindsight it's really no surprise at all.



Fitting in with the Locals

One of the great things about Verti-Crete fences is that they can be customized to fit in with various landscapes and architectural styles. In Utah, where Verti-Crete has its headquarters, stone fences and walls are a perfect fit with the rugged beauty of the Rocky Mountains. In other regions of the country, though, other patterns are much more commonly used. One such place is southern Florida, the home of ACP, where the majority of walls and fences are made of stucco. "There's something a little unnatural about a cobblestone pattern down here [in Florida]," says Sowinski. "Nobody has any illusion that those rocks were pulled out of the ground and stacked up down here."

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Introducing: The Flower Mold



Above: Verti-Crete's new flower mold was designed to reduce wear and tear on both your equipment and your crew.

Verti-Crete forms were originally conceived out of the need for a more efficient and effective way to produce precast concrete products. That same spirit of innovation brought about the recent evolution of Verti-Crete's new "flower mold," a form that offers precasters a less-labor intensive alternative to the standard Verti-Crete Post Stacker system for casting concrete posts. The newly developed form is called a flower mold because of the unique manner in which it is opened: there are four steel doors that open individually from hinges at the bottom of the form, like petals on a flower. The doors then rest on a curb on the lower half of the form, preventing the doors from falling or slipping during the stripping process.

This new iteration of the column form was developed to accelerate production, to decrease labor, and to make the forms more user-friendly. As Verti-Crete worked to develop the prototype, they learned that one of their licensees, Doug Schanel of Front Range Verti-Crete, had several ideas that might make the Post Stacker easier to operate.

"After I first invested in our Verti-Crete system, I was out there everyday working with our guys getting used to those forms," says Schanel. "I put my greasy cover-alls on and went out to operate those

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Stucco (cont'd from page 1)

Sowinski realized that in order to succeed in the local market, it would be vital to recognize the patterns that would sell well and those that would not. He recalls, “We found out in a hurry that when you have a large market share with stucco homes, you just can’t do a stacked stone look on the walls. You’ve got to know what your market wants.” Once Sowinski realized that he would need a stucco pattern to be competitive in the Florida market, he asked Verti-Crete to produce the new molds for him. Verti-Crete’s master mold makers created the first stucco mold and ACP was able to capitalize on the high demand for stucco fencing. Despite the popularity of the stucco pattern among homeowners since ACP started producing it, Sowinski maintains that he still prefers the ledge stone pattern. “The stucco definitely represents the biggest market opportunity that we have down here, but the ledge stone is still our first choice to install because it sets us apart. People recognize it. When we do stucco, it’s a nice looking product, but it doesn’t really differentiate itself like the ledge stone.”

The distinctiveness of the ledge stone pattern can be a double-edged sword, though. While the ledge stone pattern is certainly recognizable and very attractive, stucco is often the preferred choice when it comes to landscape design. Unlike Verti-Crete’s stone patterns, which are beautiful enough to make a statement on their own, the stucco pattern provides a clean and simple background to complement the work of a landscape designer. The neutrality of the stucco pattern also allows it to fit unobtrusively with various architectural styles, which can be a real advantage when building a fence in a neighborhood with diverse landscape and architectural styles.

Chris Barker of C&M Precast in Kerrville, Texas can attest to the versatility of the stucco pattern when it comes to blending in with surrounding architecture. “We did a job in a neighborhood down here. None of the houses had much rock work, but there wasn’t much stucco, either. In that case, the ledge stone probably would

have looked out of place with the neighborhood, but the stucco allows us to match almost any material. That’s a really nice aspect of the stucco.” When the final product went up, the neighbors and the homeowners were pleased with both the look and the quality of the fence. “I try to keep a pretty open dialogue with our customers,” says Barker, “and I don’t think we’ve completed a job using the stucco that our customers haven’t been thrilled with.”

Only the Best

In areas where stucco is popular, the high quality of precast concrete fencing is a major advantage. Using precast concrete “stucco” eliminates many of the potential problems that homeowners face when using traditional stucco. The first advantage is that, unlike traditional stucco which is applied over a wall of mortar block, each Verti-Crete fence panel is a solid piece of concrete. These solid pieces of concrete are impervious to the peeling, flaking, and mold growth that occur when moisture gets trapped between the stucco and the mortar block in traditional stucco fences.

The configuration of Verti-Crete fencing is another significant advantage which makes it much less vulnerable to the destructive effects of freeze-thaw cycles. Because there is a natural expansion joint where every column and panel meet, there is no danger of grout joints popping or cracking as there would be with traditional stucco. The advantages of precast help homeowners and property owners avoid another inconvenience of owning a stucco fence: the nightmarish task of patching a stucco fence. According to Sowinski, “It’s almost impossible to match stucco when you’re doing a patch job. The colors end up different, and every guy applies it differently, so it just doesn’t look the same when you patch it.” This problem is eliminated with Verti-Crete stucco fences.

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—Rick Sowinski



Better Looking

Verti-Crete’s stucco molds have several unique characteristics that set them apart. First, stucco panels can be made 16 feet long instead of the typical 12 feet long. This allows for a more continuous looking fence that is not broken up as frequently by columns. Particularly in areas where there are long stretches of wall with little change in elevation—like Florida—it is important that fences have a more continuous appearance. Sowinski says, “We had a number of customers

“I don’t think we’ve completed a job using stucco that our customers haven’t been thrilled with.”

—Chris Barker

who suggested that the stone columns every 13 feet looked a little busy. Especially when you're driving by the wall, it doesn't have the same smooth look—it all gets jumbled together. When the columns are spaced out to every 17 feet, the fence has a little better aesthetic appeal." Another benefit of the longer panel is that it decreases installation costs, making precasters with the 16-foot long panel system more competitive from a price standpoint. Verti-Crete designed their 16-foot molds so that the stucco pattern extends all the way to the end of the panel.

When you look at all the benefits of the stucco pattern, it should be no surprise at all that it has grown in popularity with Verti-Crete licensees around the country. Today, there are stucco systems in Utah, Florida, Texas, and Arizona. Verti-Crete anticipates that the stucco pattern will also be a great success in other areas around the country. Watch for stucco fencing to make an appearance in your area.

Flower Mold (cont'd from page 1)

forms with my guys for over 30 days. After that I knew there were a couple changes I wanted to make." Verti-Crete was then able to collaborate with Schanel, who offered suggestions for improvements to Verti-Crete's prototype based on his experience using the column forms.



Verti-Crete's main motivation was to make the processes of pouring and stripping the column forms less labor-intensive. The new column form reduces or eliminates much of the lifting and physical exertion typically required to operate a standard Post Stacker system. Although the flower molds do take up more production space than the Post Stacker, Schanel estimates that the newer flower mold has reduced his labor costs by 50–70% on the manufacturing side of things. "Our industry is all about making things less labor-intensive, because that means we are more profitable at the end of the day. The more we can do to cut labor, the better."

After reviewing the modifications Schanel had suggested, Verti-Crete was able to incorporate some of those ideas into their prototype, which was then tested for usability and efficiency. Production of the forms for sale commenced shortly after, and the new flower mold is now available for purchase in all of Verti-Crete's stone and stucco patterns. "We're very excited about this new product," says Mike Sharp of Verti-Crete. "Many of our licensees will still want to stick with the standard Post Stacker because of space constraints, but the flower mold is a fantastic new alternative."

Winter Trade Show Schedule

The 2008 trade show season is nearly upon us, and Verti-Crete has a busy exhibiting schedule ahead. If you are planning to visit any of the following shows, be sure to visit us.

World of Concrete

Las Vegas
January 21-25
Booth: N3147

ICCX

Johannesburg
February 18-20
Booth: 5

MCPX

Denver
February 6-9
Booth: 1429

CONEXPO-CON/AGG

Las Vegas
March 10-15
Booth: GP-50744



New Pattern: Dryfit LedgeStone

Verti-Crete is pleased to announce the addition of a new pattern, Dryfit LedgeStone, to their already diverse line up. The new pattern is quite similar to the original LedgeStone pattern with a couple of significant differences. Dryfit LedgeStone has no grout joints, giving the pattern more of a natural stacked-stone appearance; the new mold also includes a cut sandstone false cap. Another unique characteristic of this style is that the master mold for this pattern accommodates not only the standard 12-foot long panels but can also be used to produce 16-foot long panels. This makes it possible to achieve 17-foot centers, which decreases installation costs and can add to the aesthetic appeal of the final product. Call or email Mike Sharp at Verti-Crete if you'd like more information about products available in the Dryfit LedgeStone pattern.



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