

Making Stones in Alchemy

by Dennis William Hauck



Making stones in alchemy is no great mystery, although it is an arduous process. While the techniques used have not all survived in modern chemistry, they are the same operations used by ancient alchemists.

Basically, there are two kinds of stones: vegetable stones made from plants or herbs, and mineral stones made from minerals, crystals, or metals. In the lab, the Philosopher's Stone is considered to be a mineral stone made from gold, mercury, or antimony. But before we discuss the Philosopher's Stone, let's review the process for making the lesser stones.

Again, making stones is no big secret. Most alchemists produce five or more during their active years. You can get a good idea of what it takes to create a stone by reviewing the process of confecting a vegetable stone. Today, the majority of alchemists would follow the spagyric method set down by Paracelsus in the sixteenth century to accomplish this. It involves isolating and recombining the Three Essentials of Sulfur, Mercury, and Salt at the astrologically appropriate times.

The plant's soul (or Sulfur) is obtained by steam-distilling the essential oil from the crushed plant. The remaining parts of the plant are digested and fermented, and the resulting solution is rectified to get the alcohol or spirit of Mercury, which is its life force. The residue of stems and leaves left behind is the plant's dead body. This material is dried and incinerated to ash. The ash is ground fine, dissolved in water, and filtered. The liquid is then evaporated, which produces a fine, white crystalline Salt. This is the plant's true body.

The separated Three Essentials are now recombined. First, the crystallized Salt is roasted for a week. Then the Salt is ground again and spread in a warm dish outdoors to absorb atmospheric moisture. Alternatively, a few drops of fresh dew can be added. This whole process is repeated two more times.

Next, the Salt is saturated with its oily Sulfur and placed in an incubator. After a week, the Salt is reanimated by saturation with the alcohol spirit of its Mercury. After a period of digestion, the solution is distilled by cohobation, in which the condensate is poured again and again upon the matter left at the bottom of the vessel. Finally, the original plant is resurrected in an exalted form known as the elixir.



To create the stone, the elixir material is evaporated, ground, gently calcined, reanimated, and distilled again by cohobation. (*A stone of hyssop is shown at left – from John Reid III.*) To cure the stone, it is digested in an incubator for another 6-12 months. The cured stone is said to have fundamental healing power at the level of soul that affects the whole body. It will be able to draw out and restore the soul (sulfuric oil) from any other macerated plant by soaking them together in alcohol.

Because of astrological considerations, creating a vegetable stone can take 2-6 years or more and usually requires the preparation of more plant material, oil, and alcohol to feed the process. It is an ongoing relationship that

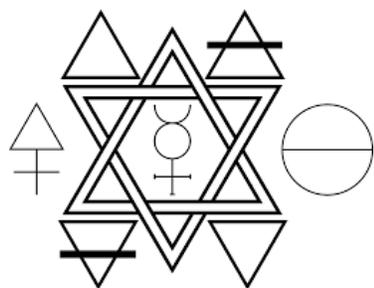
requires a lot of dedication on the part of the alchemist. It should be noted that the alchemist's intuition, based on his or her relationship with the substance to be transformed, is what guides the work. Quantities, timing, and the sequence of operations are all subject to change based on this deeper connection. It ain't chemistry!

The Philosopher's Stone is the grand prize of mineral alchemy. The story of the Philosopher's Stone began with Alexandrian and Arabian alchemists and soon captured the imagination of the entire world. By the Middle Ages, it was not only the touchstone that transformed base metals into gold but also held the secret to eternal life and spiritual perfection. However, the Philosopher's Stone was never just a psychological scheme or philosophical idea to alchemists. Both Eastern and Western alchemists believed it was a tangible, physical object they could create in their laboratories.

There are three traditional ways to create the Philosopher's Stone. The first is the Wet Way using lead acetate. The second is the Dry Way using antimony and the Star Regulus. And the third way is known as the Path of Mercury. The Wet and Dry paths have been covered in some detail by other authors and can be found archived on the Internet. For a comprehensive and scholarly look at these processes, I recommend a new book just published in June 2015, [Cracking the Philosopher's Stone: Origins, Evolution, and Chemistry of Gold Making](#). I collaborated on this book with J. Eric LaPort and wrote the Foreword. This book and others on practical alchemy can be ordered from DWHauck.com/recommended.htm.

I will briefly summarize the alternative path of Mercury, which has been described in some detail by Robert Bartlett and Rubellus Petrinus. Many do not take this path because of the dangers of working with mercury. It emits odorless fumes that attack the brain and nervous system. Do not follow hazardous path unless you have a solid background in laboratory techniques and have access to a modern, well-equipped lab.

Alchemists believed mercury was a form of First Matter, and like the archetypal First Matter, they felt it was influenced by human consciousness. Indeed, Mercury seems to flow and vibrate with a mind of its own, which is why alchemists called it quicksilver and viewed it as the living metal *Argent Vive*.



The work begins with the purification of common mercury. Today, it is distilled three times to purify it, but in the past, it was usually washed in rainwater and sea salt. When the salt blackened, it was rinsed out, and the process repeated until the salt darkened no more. Next, an equal amount of sea salt was added to the mercury, and the mixture was saturated with vinegar. After mixing thoroughly, the salt and vinegar were rinsed out for the final time.

The purified mercury has to be reanimated with Celestial Fire to awaken its generative power. There are several ways to do this, but the simplest is using the Seed of Gold. Powdered gold is added to the purified mercury and digested for six months. The mercury is animated by absorbing the seed of gold.

Another way is to use an alloy of antimony, silver, and copper known as the Lunar Venusian Regulus. It is amalgamated to the purified mercury and distilled. This process is repeated seven times, which produces an animated mercury.

Still another way to animate mercury is by Cinnabar (mercury sulfide). Equal amounts of sulfur and purified mercury are blended until the mixture turns black. Then an equal weight of iron filings is mixed in. The mixture is transferred into a retort and distilled, and the vapor condenses into mercury. The process is repeated seven times to obtain the animated mercury.

Once we have the animated mercury, we can proceed to that grand moment in alchemy – the Sacred Marriage. Mercury is the Queen in this royal marriage, and gold is the King. Their offspring is the Philosopher's Child, which will mature (or cure) into the Philosopher's Stone.

The animated mercury and pure powdered gold are mixed together to form an amalgam. This is sealed hermetically in a glass vessel and digested until it passes through the three stages of Black, White, and Red. The temperature at the start is 50°C. When the mass turns black, it is raised to 65°.

In about three months, an iridescent sheen will appear on the surface, which marks the Peacock's Tail. In another nine months or so, the matter will begin to turn white. Increase the heat to 130°C for a few months, until the matter displays a yellow color that soon turns reddish. Increase the heat to 200°C for another two months until a deep red color shows. Then break open the glass to retrieve the Red Stone.



To use the Red Stone to transmute metals, it must undergo a further process known as ceration to give it a waxy consistency. The amalgam is squeezed through a cloth and the softer material that comes through is poured into a glass vessel. Digest the material for three months at each of the heats in the previous step. Then, break open the vessel and remove the waxy material, which can now be projected onto metals.

The projection power of the Red Stone can be increased significantly in a process referred to as multiplication. Use part of the Red Stone prepared prior to ceration and add ten parts animated mercury. Once again, seal it in a glass vessel and digest it according to the color-based procedure outlined above. This time, the colors will progress much faster through the cycle.

This process can be repeated seven times. It is said that if this is done more than seven times, the Stone will begin to emit light and become unstable. If all works out, the Stone can be ground into a powder that is cast into molten metals to transmute them to a nobler state.

I should mention a fourth tradition known as the path of the First Matter. It begins with the seemingly impossible task of capturing the First Matter, which is such a mystery even alchemists have a hard time talking about it. That is probably why the main text for this work is a series of wordless drawings known as the *Mutus Liber* or "Silent Book."

Towards the end of my apprenticeship in alchemy in Vienna, I assisted extracting First Matter from black dirt, although I am still not clear about what we really accomplished. The dirt around Vienna was apparently not good enough, so we drove all the way to the Black Forest in southwestern Germany to fetch the blackest dirt we could find. Then began an eight-year process of filtering, digesting, fermenting, and distilling the products over and over again. The materials added over the years included many liters of dew, various kinds of young sprouts, thatch, but no metals.

I was present for just a few months before I had to return to America. I can only describe it as psychophysical work in which one's attitude can affect the outcome. Once the First Matter is achieved, it is treated like a kind of animated mercury, and the work continues with the Three Essentials and Four Elements. I returned to observe the progress of the work a couple times, but the final products were never shared with me.

Whether or not the First Matter can be captured in the lab, I cannot say for sure. I can definitely affirm it is not a scientific or mechanically reproducible phenomenon. I do believe the First Matter is an important ingredient in the Philosopher's Stone that is represented by the universal mercury or Azoth. I was taught First Matter was easiest to retrieve from black dirt, while some traditions say urine or other rejected substances should be used. But wherever it is obtained, the First Matter is the same for everything. It is the original matrix from the first moment of Creation.