

Liquid Etching Ground Recipe

2 lb 3 oz ($\approx$ 2.2 pounds) **asphaltum paint** (or liquid asphaltum / bitumen varnish)

"Bitumen paint" is the Australian/UK term for what US printmakers usually call asphaltum.

1.4 oz (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz) **beeswax**

1 quart ($\approx$ 33.8 fl oz) **mineral spirits**

"Mineral turpentine" is the Australian name for mineral spirits (also sold as paint thinner or odorless mineral spirits).

$\frac{7}{8}$ oz (about 0.9 oz) **rosin** (also called colophony or pine resin)

Method:

Gently melt everything in a **double boiler** (bain-marie) until the beeswax is fully dissolved and the mixture is smooth. Stir well, then divide into jars. It keeps for a long time.

Notes on Ingredients

Asphaltum / bitumen paint: Available from printmaking suppliers (Graphic Chemical, Takach Press, etc.) as liquid asphaltum or powdered asphaltum that you can dissolve. Avoid ordinary roofing tar if possible — artist-grade asphaltum is cleaner and more consistent.

Rosin: Sold as powdered rosin at art suppliers, hardware stores, or music stores (for violin bows).

Mineral spirits: Standard solvent used by US printmakers for thinning asphaltum grounds.

Alternative Traditional Hard Ground Recipe

A widely used traditional formula measured by volume (easier for many people) is:

1 part **rosin**

2 parts **beeswax**

3 parts **asphaltum** (powdered or lump)

Melt in a double boiler, strain through cheesecloth into cold water, then form into balls. This is a classic hard-ground recipe used by many etchers.

The volume-based hard ground above is more commonly referenced in printmaking literature and is often easier to handle and store. Many contemporary printmakers also simply buy commercial liquid asphaltum ground and thin it with mineral spirits as needed.