# Frugal Ways To Clean and Disinfect Your Garden Tools

It’s spring and for many of us that’s a great reminder to do some spring cleaning. Cleaning isn’t just for the house, either; you should spring clean your garden. And, of course, you should clean and disinfect your garden tools throughout the year as well. Here are some of the most frugal ways that you can do that,.

## Difference Between Cleaning and Disinfecting Garden Tools

Last year, we looked at five frugal ways to disinfect garden tools. We’re going to talk more about disinfecting but also about cleaning. So what is the difference between when you clean and disinfect garden tools?

The two things are related, of course. But cleaning gardening tools simply means washing off the soil and whatever else might be visible on the tools. This is something that you should doing regularly. It helps keep them in good working order, preventing rust and other damage. It also helps prevent the spread of disease or other garden problems if you're using the same tools throughout the garden.

Cleaning is also something you might do before disinfecting your garden tools. Disinfecting takes it a set further, though. This is all about killing the germs that might cause harm to your garden. It's a more specific approach to keeping your plants safe. It's especially important when you know that there's been a fungus or pest in the garden. However, you'll want to disinfect regularly as well.

## Why Clean and Disinfect Garden Tools

It's important to both clean and disinfect your garden tools for many reasons including:

- Prevent spread of disease in your garden
- Prevent spread of pests in your garden
- Prolong the life of your tools
- Keep the tools in the best working order to make working with them easy and efficient
- Having a good garden routine, including cleaning, helps maximize the mental health benefits of gardening

# Frugal Ways To Clean and Disinfect Your Garden Tools

In last year's article, we covered five frugal ways to disinfect your garden tools:

1. Bleach water
2. Distilled white vinegar

3. Alcohol
4. Trisodium Phosphates
5. Bleach-free disinfectant wipes

You can check that article for more details about each of those. Today, we'll look at even more frugal ways to clean and disinfect your garden tools.

## Frugal Cleaning Options

- Cloths and rags. Part of cleaning your garden tools is simply wiping the soil off of them. Therefore you can use cleaning cloths, including rags, to clean your garden tools. Simply wipe them down. You can do this after each use, weekly, or at least right now for spring cleaning.
- Sponges and scrubbers. If the dirt on your tools is a bit more persistent, then use a sponge to scrub it off. You can also use a wire brush for the same purpose. Add some elbow grease.
- Plain water. Hose down the hose. In other words, simply spray clean water onto your garden tools to clean them.. You might also wash them in a bathtub or power wash them with a pressure washer.
- Soapy water. Be careful about using soap in the garden because it can be bad for your plants. That said, you can use it to wash your tools. Be sure to rinse them completely and fully dry them before using them again.
- Baking soda. This makes a great scrub for deeper cleaning. Mix it with water to create a paste that you can scrub with.
- Lemon juice: Squeeze fresh lemon juice onto your tools and scrub them with a brush or sponge. Let the lemon juice sit on the tools for a few minutes, then rinse them with water and dry them with a clean cloth.
- Sandpaper: If your garden tools are rusty, you can use sandpaper to remove the rust and restore their surface.

Simply rub the sandpaper over the rusted area until it’s gone, then wipe the tool clean with a cloth.
- Sand. That’s right – sand can clean your garden tools. You put clean fresh sand into a bucket. Then you mix in vegetable oil to moisten it. Put tools like shovels into the mixture and rub them around. This both sharpens and cleans the tool. Then brush off the sand.

After cleaning your tools, you might want to coat any metal parts with vegetable oil. This is a great frugal way to prevent rust.

## Frugal Disinfecting Options

When you’re ready to disinfect your garden tools, there are many frugal options in addition to the five mentioned above. These include:

- Hydrogen peroxide. Like alcohol or bleach, this is another effective disinfectant for garden tools. Mix equal parts hydrogen peroxide and water. Put that on your tools and let it sit for a few minutes. Rinse and dry the tools.
- Tea tree oil. Mix a few drops in water. Apply to your tools, let them sit, and then rinse and dry. There are other essential oils you may use as well. Always research what is safe for the specific plants in your garden.
- Apple cider vinegar. This is similar to using distilled white vinegar to disinfect your garden tools.
- Grapefruit seed extract. This is another natural disinfectant that you can combine with water to make a solution to disinfect tools.
- Boiling water. We all know that boiling water helps make it safer. It is also great for disinfecting other things. So, use it on your garden tools.
- Steam cleaner. This is a surprisingly effective way to disinfect garden tools, and it’s frugal if you already

own one. Simply fill the steam cleaner with water, and use it to steam the tools. The heat from the steam should kill any bacteria or viruses on the tools.
- Sunlight. Did you know that sunlight is a natural disinfectant that can help kill bacteria and viruses on garden tools? So, leave them out in the sun. Make sure to rotate them regularly so all parts are disinfected.

These are frugal, natural options. You can also use other cleaners but you want to make sure that they are safe in your garden. You should always thoroughly rinse and dry after disinfecting.

## Read More:

- Vinegar Uses in Garden
- Are Old Tires Toxic to Plants?
- How Planting a Garden Can Save You Money

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# What Happens to Plants If You Use Enviro Ice on Them?

About one year ago, I wrote an article here about Enviro Ice. Companies use this product to keep items cold for shipping. I receive it in my HungryRoot food deliveries each month. According to the company, you can use it this nitrogen-based product to fertilizer your plants. I considered trying it. However, for reasons explained in the article, I didn't actually ever end up doing so. Nevertheless, many people have asked me what I think about using it. Therefore, I decided to scour the Internet for information from people who have tried it. Here's what I found.

## Why I Haven't Tried Enviro Ice on My Plants

I don't keep too many plants myself. I live in an apartment in San Francisco. Moreover, I'm not great with plants. As a result, I have to be careful to follow directions exactly if I have any chance of keeping plants alive. I'm just not

intuitive about it like so many other people are. On more than one occasion, I've called my sister, who was a plant sciences major, to ask her what one of my plants might need.

There isn't a lot of information out there about using Enviro Ice on plants. It's something that even the company itself seems to be studying. Therefore, there aren't great specific instructions. In other words, I can't find anything that says, "use this amount of Enviro Ice this often to get good results for your plants." There definitely don't seem to be instructions for using it on specific plants. So, even though I still get Enviro Ice every week, I haven't tried it on any plants. Instead, I put it down my sink drain as described in my original article.

# The Big Questions

I turned to the Internet to find out what people are saying about using Enviro Ice on their plants. Mostly, I scoured Reddit, although there are a few other forum and blog posts about it that you can easily find in a Google search. A few key questions came up:

## What Form of Nitrogen Is In Enviro Ice?

I confess that I don't fully understand the science behind this. However, several people online have asked what form of nitrogen or nitrogen compound this product is or contains. Apparently there are different forms of it. The company says that Enviro Ice is "nitrogen based." However, that doesn't give information about the form of nitrogen, which would apparently be important for people seeking to use it on plants.

## What Else Is In Enviro Ice?

This is the most frequent question. People who are going to use Enviro Ice on their plants want to know about ALL of the

ingredients that might be in this product. Unfortunately, as far as I can find, we don't have this information. There are two key problems that people bring up:

- Is there anything else in the product that could harm plants, soil, or other living garden things? Presumably, the answer should be no. After all, they advertise clearly that it's safe to use in your garden. They state specifically on their website, "When thawed and diluted with water, the Enviro Ice coolant mixture is a safe, suitable fertilizer for both indoor and outdoor plants." Nevertheless, without specific information about the ingredients in the product, we just have to take their word on its safety.
- Is there anything in the product that I don't want to consume? In other words, if I'm growing fruits and vegetables that I plan to eat, is Enviro Ice safe for use? Obviously, people have a diverse range of food sensitivities. Therefore, this isn't a simple question. Either way, we don't have a clear answer on the ingredients yet.

## Perhaps the Ingredients Are …

I asked ChatGPT if it could tell me what is in Enviro Ice. I'm not sure how accurate it's information was, since I couldn't find it elsewhere, but it claims: "The gel in Enviro Ice is made from a blend of natural ingredients, including seaweed extract, plant-based amino acids, and other plant-derived nutrients. "

In a thread over on Houzz, user toxcruasadr said that they couldn't find the ingredients. However, they suspect that it's "probably ammonium nitrate solution, which is just nitrogen fertilizer." Moreover, they say that the gel is probably "polyethylene glycol (PEG) which is actually a food ingredient." That's the best guess I was able to find online.

# What Happens When You Use Enviro Ice on Plants?

Okay, so those are the questions that people have. Over on Reddit and around the web, I've found a few people who responded to these questions. They have tried the product on their plants and documented their experiences. The experience were varied. However, when looked at as a whole, they indicate that with proper dilution, Enviro Ice does work safely to help plants grow.

## Enviro Ice Works on Plants When Diluted

User KimAlex17 shared on Reddit two years ago that it works great on their plants. They actually called the customer service number to ask about how to use it. They followed the recommendation to dilute the gel, using one gallon of water per 16 ounces of gel. They say that they have 77 happy plants.

Similarly, in the same thread, user Optimal_Cheetah3755 reports using it on a moth orchid plant. It sprouted new leaves and new roots. They say they use just 1-2 teaspoons of the gel per plant. They dilute that with water, although they didn't say how much.

## In Fact, It Might Be Great For Trees

In the same thread, user ISK_Reynolds tried the product on two young indoor trees. They used three packs diluted with two gallons of water. They put this on one of the trees, but not on the other one. The one that received the diluted Enviro Ice is thriving better than the one that did not.

## Failure to Dilute Can Burn Plants and Soil

Several people reported that Enviro Ice didn't work for them.

They said it burned either the plant or the soil or both. However, in all cases, it seems that they either didn't dilute the soil or didn't sufficiently dilute it.

## Can You Grow Plants in Just EnviroIce?

In the same thread, user AJ_Effendi talks about trying to grow water plants in just the gel. This is atypical. Most people are using it to fertilize the soil around their plants. This user found that some cuttings have survived well in the gel. Their stems are a bit squishy but above the waterline they do grow. That said, some died. It was a mixed experiment.

## Additional Links:

- 5 Reasons To Use Fish Amino Acid On Your Plants
- Does My Brown Thumb Make Gardening a Waste of Money?
- 4 Cost-Effective Organic Garden Fertilizers

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# Cheap and Effective Liquid Nutrients for Your Indoor Plants

If you're a plant enthusiast, then you know that your indoor plants require a balance of light, water, and nutrients to thrive. While water and sunlight are easy to provide, it can be challenging to find the right liquid nutrients for indoor plants without breaking the bank. Fortunately, there are plenty of cheap and effective liquid nutrient options that you can make at home. Here are some of the most popular options:

## Compost Tea as Liquid Nutrients for Indoor Plants

Compost tea is one of the most popular DIY liquid fertilizers for indoor plants. This isn't tea, per se. Instead, it's a means of creating a tea-like liquid of steeped compost.

To make compost tea, you'll need to gather some compost and a container to brew the tea. Fill the container with water and add the compost. Use a ratio of one part compost to four parts water. Stir the mixture well. Then, cover the container to

keep out pests. Let the “tea” brew for several days, stirring occasionally. After several days, strain the liquid through a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth to remove any solid particles.

Once you’ve made your compost tea, you can use it to water your indoor plants. Be sure to dilute the tea with water before using it, as it can be quite potent. Once again, use a ratio of one part compost tea to four parts water. So, yes, add water again. Then use the diluted “tea” as liquid nutrients for your indoor plants. Most plants want this added about once per week. However, it obviously depends on which plants you have.

# Fish Emulsion as Nutrients

Another popular DIY liquid fertilizer is fish emulsion. Fish emulsion is made by mixing fish waste with Molasses to create a nutrient-rich liquid fertilizer. Fish emulsion is an excellent option for indoor gardeners who want to provide their plants with a boost of nutrients without spending a lot of money.

To make a fish emulsion, you’ll need some fish waste, molasses, and a container to mix. You can use any type of fish waste, including fish guts, heads, and bones. Place the fish waste in the container with the molasses. Let the mixture sit for 21-30 days. After several weeks, strain the liquid.

Once you’ve made your fish emulsion, you can use it to water your indoor plants. You want to dilute 2-5ml of fish emulsion in 1 liter of water.

You should apply it during the vegetative stage of the plant (between the germination stage and flowering stage). Spray it in the soil once a week.

## Seaweed Extract

Seaweed extract is another popular option for liquid nutrients for indoor plants. Seaweed extract is made by soaking dried seaweed in water to create a nutrient-rich liquid fertilizer. To make seaweed extract, you'll need some dried seaweed and a container to brew the fertilizer. Place the dried seaweed in the container and cover it with water. Let the mixture sit for several days, stirring occasionally. After several days, strain the liquid. Again, dilute with a ratio of one part to four parts water.

## Eggshell Water

Eggshells are rich in calcium, which is an essential nutrient for plants. To create a liquid fertilizer from eggshells, start by collecting your eggshells. Rinse them thoroughly to remove any remaining egg whites or yolks. Then let them dry completely. Once the eggshells are dry, crush them into small pieces.

Next, add the crushed eggshells to a container of water and let it sit for several days. The water will become infused with calcium from the eggshells, creating a nutrient-rich liquid fertilizer. Wait 3-7 days. Then strain the mixture. Add water, again about a 1:4 ratio, to create your liquid nutrients for indoor plants.

## Vegetable Water

When you boil vegetables, many of the nutrients leach out of the vegetables and into the water. Instead of pouring this water down the drain, you can use it to fertilize your indoor plants. This is a great option for frugal gardeners who are interested in sustainability. It helps prevent the waste of that water while also helping you to grow your plants.

To create vegetable water fertilizer, start by boiling your vegetables as usual. Once the vegetables are cooked, strain them out of the water and let the water cool. You can then use this nutrient-rich water to fertilize your plants. You can also freeze the vegetable water in ice cube trays and use them as a slow-release fertilizer. This is especially great if you'll be going on vacation and leaving your plants alone for a short period of time.

## Urine as Liquid Nutrients for Indoor Plants

Okay, this might not be the right choice for everyone. Nevertheless, urine is a free resource that will indeed work as a plant nutrient if you are bold enough to try it. While it may sound unappealing, urine is actually a rich source of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. These are all essential nutrients for plant growth.

To create a liquid fertilizer from urine, start by collecting your urine in a container. You can use any clean, empty jar. Once you have collected your urine, dilute it with water at a ratio of 1:10 and mix well. You can then use this mixture to water your indoor plants, making sure to apply it evenly to the soil around the plant. Be careful not to get any on the leaves or stems of your plants, as this can cause burning.

Using urine as a liquid fertilizer may not be for everyone, but it is a unique and effective option that is free and readily available. It is important to note that if you are taking any medications, you should consult with your healthcare provider before using your urine as a fertilizer, as some medications can affect the composition of urine and make it harmful to plants.

## It’s All A Type Of “Tea”

As you can see, there are plenty of cheap and effective liquid nutrients for your plants that you can make at home. They’re all made creating a sort of “tea.” You choose the nutrient-rich item that you want as your base. Then your boil it, steep it, strain it, and dilute it. After that, you’re ready to use it!

Compost tea, fish emulsion, seaweed extract, eggshells, and vegetable water are all excellent options for creating nutrient-rich liquid fertilizers. By experimenting with these DIY options, you can find the perfect liquid fertilizer to meet your indoor plants’ needs without breaking the bank. Just remember to dilute the fertilizer with water before using it and to avoid over-fertilizing your plants, as this can cause damage and potentially harm your plants.

## Additional Links:

- 5 Reasons to Use Fish Amino Acid on Your Plants
- 2 Homemade Fertilizers You Can Sell
- Should I Use Enviro Ice on My Plants?

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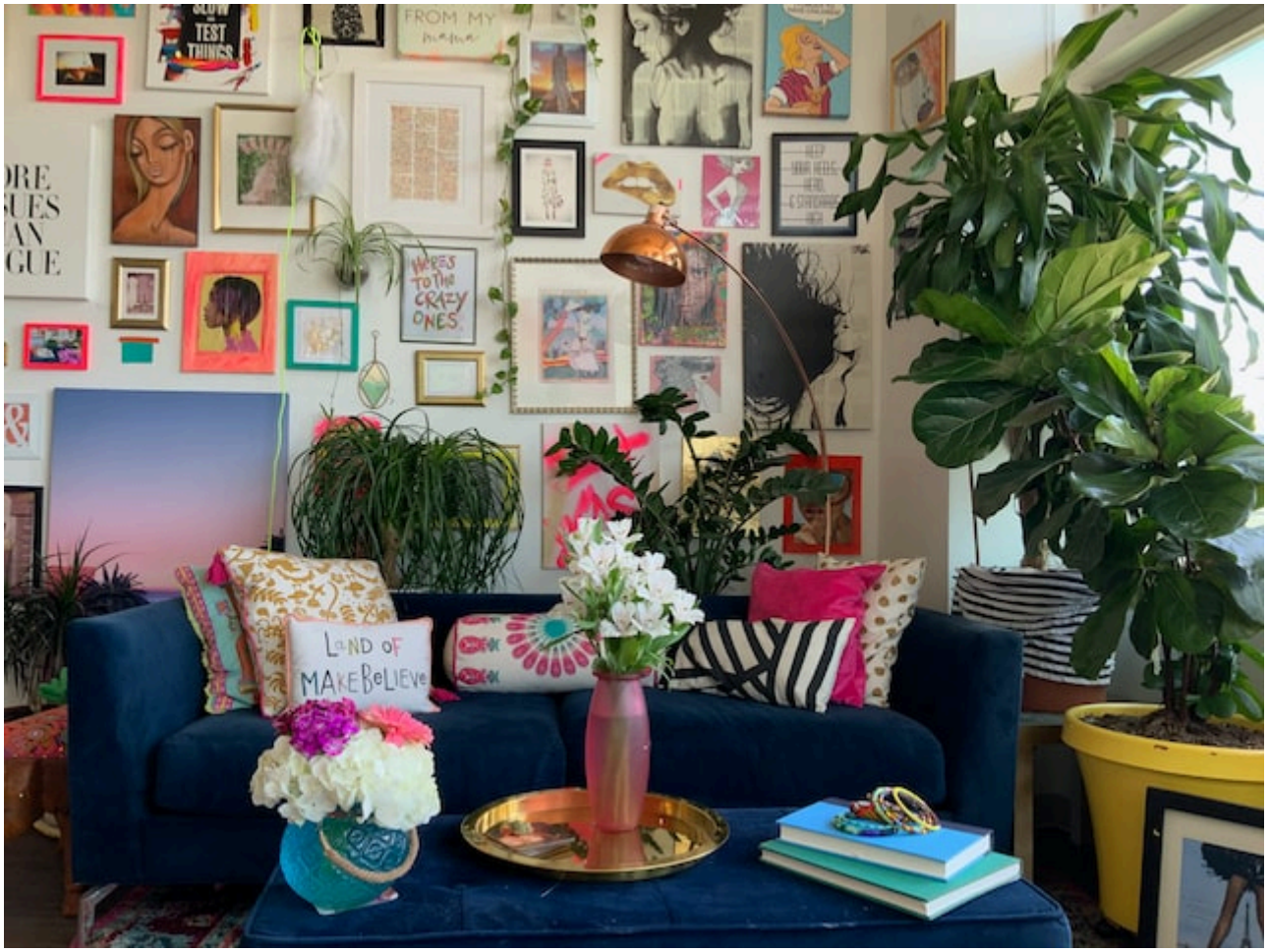
# Ponytail Palm Plant




*ponytail palm behind the couch on the left, image via Unspash @stephwilll*

I recently discovered a plant that I hadn't ever known before. It's called the ponytail palm. However, it's not actually a palm tree / plant at all. Instead, it's a succulent. And yet it looks just like a tiny little palm tree. It's adorable. I don't know why I've never come across this plant before. Now that I know about it, I'm seeing it everywhere.

## Discovering the Ponytail Palm Plant

Every month, my best friend and I try to get together at his place for what we call "wine and whine." It's just a friendship catch-up day of conversation and wine drinking. Recently, his apartment has been taken over by plants. It's funny, because neither of us was ever really good with plants. We used to live together and I don't think we ever had a

living plant in our shared apartment. I once bought him and his husband a bonsai tree, and I don't think it lasted a few months.

And yet, in recent months, my bestie has taken up indoor gardening. He's loving it. He's good at it!

So, as I've been going over there, his plant collection has grown. There were a few simple plants. Then there were some more complicated plants. He has plants that are on a weekly misting schedule. He waters other plants every few days. Over time, he has even repotted plants.

One of his most recent plant acquisitions, as you may have guessed, is the ponytail palm plant. He found it at a store while looking for new pots. He fell in love with it, he purchased it, and that's how I discovered it, sitting in the corner of his home.

## A Plant By Any Other Name …

My bestie actually introduced me to the plant as an elephant foot tree. You can see why when you look at it. After all, the trunk sure does look a lot like the foot of an elephant. However, I actually mis-remembered it as an elephant palm. It looks so much like a little palm tree. So, when I went to Google it and learn more about it, I typed in "elephant palm" and what came up was the ponytail palm tree.

According to the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, this plant's official name is *Nolina (Beaucarnea) recurvata.* We most commonly know it as the ponytail palm. However, you might also refer to it as a bottle palm. And, like I said before, people sometimes call it the elephant foot tree.

## A Palm, A Tree, A Succulent?

The ponytail palm looks like a palm tree. And yet, it’s not. Old Farmer’s Almanac explains that it’s more closely related to a Joshua Tree or a Yucca Tree. No wonder I’m drawn to this plant. I grew up in the Arizona desert. Therefore, I’m very familiar with these types of plants. I wouldn’t immediately think of the Joshua Tree when looking at the ponytail palm. Nevertheless, I see the family resemblance.

And, did you know, that the Joshua Tree isn’t a tree at all? It’s part of the agave family. And this, in turn, is a type of succulent. I’ve always loved succulents. That’s probably also the desert in me. So, again, no surprise that I found myself drawn to this plant.

## How Big Is a Ponytail Palm Tree?

My friend’s new little plant is less than one foot tall. That’s partly why I like it so much. It’s this tiny, cute little palm tree in a pot inside of the apartment. However, as I did my research, I learned that these plants can actually grow to be quite huge. According to The Almanac, they can grow naturally in the wild to 30 feet in height with leaves that extend six feet long.

Of course, they don’t get that large when cultivated in a garden. Moreover, when grown indoors, they will remain quite small. They’re usually only about four feet tall when grown indoors. So, it will be interesting to see how tall my friend’s plant will get. We will get together once a month and I can watch his baby grow!

## 5 Tips for Caring For a Ponytail

# Palm Tree

Since this isn’t my plant, I don’t actually have to worry about caring for it. That’s my friend’s job. And yet, I was curious about what kind of care it needs. Between my friend’s information and what I found online, here are the five best tips I have for taking care of an elephant foot plant:

## 1. Lots of Light

This makes sense for succulents, of course. They want a lot of sunshine.

## 2. Fast-Drying Soil

Likewise, these aren’t plants that want to sit in water. They don’t want to be very wet. Use a fast-drying soil that’s good for cacti and succulents. Keep the soil relatively dry even when watering. The top soil should be completely dry before you water the plant again.

## 3. How to Water a Ponytail Palm

Basically, you want to soak the soil so that it gets wet all through it. However, you want to use a pot with draining holes. Moreover, you want to make sure that the excess water all drains out. You don’t want wet soil for this plant. This can’t be reiterated enough, according to the Internet.

## 4. Room Temperature

The plant likes to be kept in room temperature. However, make that room a little bit chillier in the winter months. Your plant will thank you. That said, don’t let the plant sit too close to windows with cold air. You want a plant that recognizes it’s a little cooler during winter, but you certainly don’t want to freeze your plant.

## 5. Repot Every Year or Two

In order to keep the plant small, all that you really need to do is keep taking care of it in its small pot. However, you'll still need to repot it. Doing so once every year or two is ideal.

# Are Elephant Foot Plants Trending?

I didn't know about these plants until I saw my friend's recently. And yet, now that I know about them, I keep spotting them everywhere. For example, I went to a little store on Haight Street that only had a few plants among many other things and there one was! Is this a case of noticing what you're focused on? Or are these plants actually trending now?

*Are you familiar with the ponytail palm tree? What do you call it?*

PONYTAIL

# Palm Plant

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## Additional Links:

- 5 Quick Tips to Rescue Your Plant from Root Rot
- The Christmas Cactus Plant
- 5 Things to Consider When Recycling Soil

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# 5 Quick Tips To Rescue Your Plants From Root Rot

I am prone to overwatering my plants. I suspect that this comes from growing up in the desert. That might sound counterintuitive. However, I have this reverence for the magic of water as a result of my desert upbringing. And so subconsciously I tend to think that water will solve all plant problems. Which, of course, is not true. In fact, overwatering contributes to one of the most common causes of plant death: root rot. Luckily, you can prevent this problem once you're aware of it. Moreover, if you catch it early enough, you can rescue your plants from root rot.

## What Is Root Rot?

Do you have a plant that doesn't seem to be growing properly despite watering it regularly? Are the leaves wilting even though the soil is wet? Do the stems feel mushy to the touch? How about the roots – if you look at them, are they the right color? Or are they more of a red-brown shade than they ought to be? Finally, how does the soil smell? If it smells "off" and you see these other symptoms, chances are that you have root rot.

As the name suggests, the roots of your plant are rotting

away. Root rot is actually a disease. Blossom Plant explains that it has two common causes: overwatering and harmful fungi. In my case, it's usually been due to overwatering, as I explained. However, even if you are great at watering your plants properly, they may develop root rot as a result of the growth of bacterial fungi.

Sadly, once you start seeing the symptoms of root rot described above, it might be too late to rescue your plants from root rot. However, it's worth a try. Caught early enough, there are definitely things that you can do to save your plants.

# 5 Quick Tips To Rescue Your Plants From Root Rot

The most important thing that you can do is to keep a close eye on your plants. This way, you catch problems early. If caught early, try these five things to rescue your plants from root rot:

## 1. Carefully Cut Away the Rotting Roots

You can't actually "cure" root rot. In other words, you must remove the roots that are rotting. In order to do this, you will have to carefully remove the plant from the soil. Then, you will have to remove the soil from the roots as much as possible. This allows you to look at the roots. Hopefully, plenty look thriving, meaning they are vibrant, white, and beautiful. The ones with root rot will look stringy and brown, as though they are dying – because they are. Alternatively, they may be a grey color and may feel slimy to the touch. Carefully cut away all of the rotting roots. You should cut just slightly above the damaged part. Maintain as many healthy roots as possible.

## 2. Carefully Cut Away the Dying Leaves

Cutting away the rotting roots is the most important part of rescuing your plant. However, you don't want to leave other dying parts of the plant either. After all, you want to give your plant the best chance of survival. You want healthy roots to support the healthy growth of the rest of the plant. Therefore, you will also want to trim away all of the dying leaves on your plant. Be selective – trim away what you're sure is dying but leave what might potentially grow well.

## 3. Repot Your Plant in Fresh Soil

Regardless of the cause of root rot, the soil is now a problem. If you've overwatered it, you can certainly let it dry out. Nevertheless, it's not healthy enough to support the full healing of your plants. Of course, if bacteria is the cause of your root rot, then you want to get rid of the soil that has that bacteria, right? So, it's time to get rid of all of that soil. Remove as much of it as you safely can from the roots of the plant. Get rid of all soil that is in the pot. Get fresh, healthy, new, dry soil and repot the plant.

## 4. Skip the Fertilizer for Now

Plants in a Box explains that your plant is fragile from root rot. Therefore, you don't want to add the stress of fertilizer right now. Instead, just make sure that you use high-quality soil for repotting. Then hold off on fertilizer for the time being. Give the plant time to revive.

## 5. Review Your Plant's Proper Care

Even if you think that you know your plants well, it's worth it to refresh your memory. Do a little bit of research into exactly what the best conditions are for this plant to thrive. Pay careful attention to the watering instructions, of course. But also look at the sunlight it needs, the temperature it

does best in, etc. You want to give your plant as much TLC as possible while it's working to heal.

# How to Prevent Root Rot in the Future

Although you can do these things to try to rescue your plants from root rot, sometimes it just isn't going to work. Once you start seeing the signs of a rotting plant, it might be too late. Therefore, preventing root rot is really the way to go. Do all that you can to prevent it in the future so that you don't have to try to save your plants down the line.

Some of the key ways to prevent root rot include:

- Remember to check exactly what conditions are best for each particular plant.
- Be careful not to overwater your plants.
- Use the right soil to get proper drainage for each plant.
- Also, use the right pot, preferably with drainage holes, to prevent standing water.
- Check your plants regularly. Pay attention to how they look, how they smell, and what the soil is like. Catch problems early on.

## Related Posts:

- Tips to Prevent Winter Plant Damage
- 5 Ways to Reduce Water Usage in the Garden
- Cheap Ways to Improve Garden Soil

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# 5 Things I Learned About Gardening in 2022

I am happy to be back here on this blog with all of you who are interested in frugal gardening. I had taken a break due to health issues and a loss in the family throughout much of 2022. Luckily, a colleague was able to step in. It looks like they provided you with a lot of wonderful tips and information while I was gone. Now that I am back, I have been doing a lot of thinking about what I would most like to share with you in the months to come. In order to get into that, I think the best thing to do is to look back at 2022 and see what I learned. Here are the top five things I learned about gardening in 2022.

# 1. Plants Are Very Personal Gifts

I suppose that this is something that I already knew. However, I had many opportunities to think about just how personal plants are throughout 2022. As aforementioned, it was a year filled with illness and loss. As a result, many people wanted to reach out with their condolences. I received many wonderful handwritten cards. Moreover, I received practical help and emotional support. I didn't receive a lot of gifts, and I didn't receive any plants. And I am happy it was that way. Looking back now, though, I am a little surprised by this.

In my mind, it's so common for people to show up with flowers when they want to express sympathy. Or when visiting your home. And yet, I realized, people actually don't ever bring me flowers. This got me thinking – is that an old-fashioned idea? Do my people just not think of that as a gift because it's not their love language or do they know it's not mine? Mine is words and I receive cards, so that could be.

Recently, I read a memoir called "Where You End and I Begin." The mother in the memoir has a lot of rules that people in her life find unconventional. One of them is that you don't bring cut flowers to someone's home because it creates work for the hostess. However, she liked to receive potted plants. To me, that requires a lot more ongoing work! And yet, I can see the point. So, what I learned – or what I have been musing on recently – is how personal the giving and receiving of plants is.

# 2. Plants That Are Best For Sympathy and Grief

Since I was on this topic, I started wondering what plants people do choose to give if they offer them to someone who is grieving. I learned that there are many different sympathy

plants each with its own meaning. For example, gladioli represent strength. Hyacinths represent sorrow.

Since plants are indeed so personal, I don't know whether or not you want to gift one to someone who is grieving. For me, though, what I found was that perhaps I could do some intentional plant shopping in order to find plants that represent the specific stage of grief that I'm in. I learned that palms represent protection, which is something that sounds nice to have during a challenging time. The plant I selected most recently, however, is a very small orchid.

I have never kept orchids because they are known to be such finicky plants. However, I was very drawn to one, so I decided to get it for myself. And only afterward did I do some research and discover that orchids have many different meanings but one is eternal love for someone who has passed away. That feels so meaningful for me right now.

## 3. Best Crystals for the Garden

Although I find crystals to be pretty, I have never been particularly "into" crystals. In other words, I don't carry them around or add them to an altar in order to manifest the energy that I need in my life. And yet, recently, I also find myself drawn to them. Do they have inherent natural energy? Maybe, maybe not. It sure can't hurt to learn more about them and choose ones that could offer what I'm seeking, could it?

In that vein, I started learning about crystals that are popular for gardens. I will write about this in more detail in the future. The gist is that each one has a certain meaning and is good for certain types of energy. Some that are great for gardens include clear quartz and chrysocolla to promote growth, amazonite to protect against toxins in the soil and air, and black tourmaline as a protective border around a garden. It's an intriguing new approach to adding different colors, textures, and energies to a garden space that I am

excited to learn just a little bit more about.

## 4. Best Plants for Natural Plant Dyeing

I shared some of this with you in my early explorations. I have continued to explore this facet of gardening. In other words, I am very interested in growing plants for the purpose of dyeing fabric and, more specifically, organic cotton yarn. Additionally, I am interested in foraging for natural plants that are good for dyeing. To be honest, this is something that I've pursued wholeheartedly. However, thinking about doing so has been a beautiful way to enhance my daily life. And I hope to actively engage with this more in this fresh new year.

## 5. Plant and Gardening Podcasts

There is no substitute for first-hand experience. However, when I wasn't home to take care of plants, or there wasn't a garden nearby for me to enjoy, I found that books, documentaries, and podcasts made great additions to my life. Did you know there are lots of good podcasts about plants and gardening? I'll do a full post on this soon. To get you started, though, you might want to check out "The Simple Garden Life," "Garden Culture," and "Roots and Refuge." If you have any other recommendations, I'd love to know what they are!

## You Might Also Like:

- Being a Beginner in the Garden
- 5 Ways Depression Costs Me In the Garden
- 6 Tips to Revive Wilted Plants in the Garden

# Gardening Books On My Library Want Shelf

I have a confession. One of my favorite weird pastimes is going through all of the new books available at the library and placing any that I might read on my “For Later” shelf. I

do this weekly. And I admit that there are more books on the shelves than I could ever actually read. However, I do also weekly browse my shelf and request some of the books, so I do end up reading a lot of them. Today, I thought I'd share with you some of the gardening books that are on my For Later shelf at the local library.

## The Urban Garden: 101 Ways to Grow Food and Beauty in the City by Kathy Gentz

Obviously, I live in an urban area. I don't have a huge yard to garden in. However, I have a deck, windowsill pots, and access to local community gardens. Therefore, I'm always interested in ideas about gardening in the city. I'm curious to see what might inspire me among the more than 100 ideas suggested in this book.

## Companion Planting for Beginners: Pair your Plants for A Bountiful, Chemical-free Vegetable Garden by Brian Lowell

I love the idea of learning how to listen to nature when designing a garden. I remember during a vineyard tour learning about how they planted certain plants at the end of each row because they could see if there was any threat to the grapes by first checking out what was going on with those plants. That's always stuck with me. This book seems like an amazing expansion upon that education.

# The Regenerative Garden: 80 Practical Projects for Creating a Self-sustaining Garden Ecosystem by Stephanie Rose

Is her last name really Rose? That made me smile. In any case, I love DIY stuff, and I'm really curious about this idea of "practical projects." Plus, it's important to design gardens that work with nature. I'm really into xeriscaping and not planting non-native species. So, I think I'll learn a lot from this book.

# Sustainable Garden Projects, Tips and Advice for the Eco-conscious Gardener by Maryann Boswall

Here's another one that's along the same theme as the last. Whenever I see a book like this, I immediately add it to my library To Read shelf without hesitation.

# Wild: The Naturalistic Garden by Noel Kingsbury

This seems to be another one similar to the two above. My library's description of it includes:

"This is the first comprehensive overview of a new planting approach that is wild and natural by nature, reflecting the global turn towards sustainability and the current zeitgeist in garden design."

It's a look at forty different gardens from this perspective. I believe that I could learn a lot from this book.

## Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto by Leslie Buck

This is a book that I've actually already gotten from the library and have sitting right next to me to read soon. Memoirs are my very favorite genre. This one is about a female American gardener who went and trained in Japanese gardens.

## Color in and Out of the Garden Watercolor Practices for Painters, Gardeners, and Nature Lovers by Lorene Edwards Forkner

I'm not actually a painter. However, I'm an artist (fiber and mixed media as well as writing). And I'm always inspired by creative exercises in different mediums. So, I probably won't get out the paints to work along with this book, and yet I'm certain that it will give me inspiration.

## Royal Gardens of the World by Mark Lane: 21 Celebrated Gardens From the Alhambra to Highgrove and Beyond

I've never honestly thought about Royal Gardens much. However, I imagine it would be like going on a vacation in the mind to flip through the pages of this book. Therefore, it's on my list!

*Help me build my wish list! What are some of your favorite gardening books?*

## Read More:

- Best Garden Instagram Accounts for Inspiration
- 4 Best TV Shows for Gardeners
- Being a Beginner in the Garden

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# Best Garden Instagram Accounts for Inspiration

Social media is a neutral thing. It’s neither good nor bad. It’s all about how you use it. For me, I limit the time spent on social media. Moreover, I only fill my account with things that inspire me. I want the scroll to be a resource for me, a way to focus on what I love, breathe for a moment into beautiful things, and feel energized to create and connect. I

mostly use Instagram. And I follow a lot of accounts about plants and gardens because looking at them for a few minutes per day is inspiration. Here are what I consider the best garden Instagram accounts for inspiration.

## 1. @japanese_gardens

This is truly my favorite of all of the garden Instagram accounts. It’s a simple account in that each post is just a photo of a beautiful Japanese garden. There’s a caption that shares where the garden is located. That’s it. It’s all about the pure beauty of these simple, organized, aesthetically-pleasing gardens. I have never seen a photo here that didn’t make me smile.

## 2. @thejungalow

This is a totally different type of account from @japanese_gardens. It’s actually an interior design account filled with beautiful spaces. So often, though, those spaces include plants and/or decor inspired by plants. In contrast to the austere serenity of @japanese_gardens, this one is maximalism to the core. It’s abundance. And I am someone who goes back and forth between enjoying minimalist decor and abundance overflowing, so I absolutely love both of these accounts.

## 3. @sfbotanicalgarden

I enjoy following as many local accounts as possible. Therefore, it’s no surprise that I follow the San Francisco botanical garden. (I also follow our @conservatoryofflowers.) Mostly its images of what’s blooming and blossoming and vibrant in the garden at any given time. However, there are also event announcements, etc. This reminds me to get out and see what’s happening in the gardens and natural areas around

me. And THAT is always inspiring.

## 4. @outersunsetgardens

This is another local account. One of the most interesting things about San Francisco is our microclimates. It can feel hot in one neighborhood and cold in the next. I often joke that it’s always 65 degrees in San Francisco, but it can be a hot 65 or a cold 65. These microclimates lead to totally different plants and gardens depending on the neighborhood. This account is “a catalogue of plants that thrive in the unique microclimate of the Outer Sunset.” Note that this is an old account, so it’s not one that I see pop up when I scroll, but when I visit it, I’m always reminded me of the very specific local beauty here.

## 5. @gardendesignmag

There are so many great gardening magazines here and in the UK. Most of them, of course, have their own Instagram accounts. While it’s not the same as looking at those bright gardens, and the tips that the magazines offer, on glossy pages, I still find it inspiring to check out these Instagram accounts. This is one of my favorites for pretty photos, both landscape and close-up, of flowers and other plants.

## 6. @leafygreenshack

I honestly tend to prefer photo-rich accounts to Instagram reels, stories, and videos. I just think it helps me slow down and enjoy the visual beauty. However, when I’m in the mood for great garden reels, @leafygreenshack is a favorite. It’s an account about :growing and collecting plants in Australia.” The reels are pretty and upbeat and make me smile.

## 7. @monalogue

And finally, here's another account whose reels I love. It's self-defined as a Cottagecre account by a neurodivergent person sharing "life from our cottage in the English countryside." So it's not all garden all of the time, but it's a lot of garden. The music in the reels is usually lovely and uplifting. And there's just a whimsical romance to this account that I adore. It's dreamy.

*What are your favorite garden Instagram accounts?*

## Read More:

- 4 Best TV Shows for Gardeners
- Being a Beginner in the Garden
- 5 Ways Healthy Gardens Help the Planet

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# 4 Best TV Shows for Gardeners

One of my favorite ways to get inspiration for creative endeavors is to watch reality TV competitions and other similar shows. For example, I'm a huge fan of shows like Project Runway that get me thinking about fashion design options. There are some great garden-related TV shows out there as well. Of course, if you are streaming your favorite TV show you will need a reliable internet connection. For this reason, it could be worth keeping up to date with your satellite dish maintenance to ensure that leaves, dirt, and general debris on your dish don't affect the quality of your internet signal. With that said, here are some of the best TV shows for gardeners.

## Clipped

Obviously, HGTV is the go-to channel for shows about homes and gardens. Therefore, it’s no surprise that one of the best TV shows for gardeners is a reality show on HGTV. It’s also probably no surprise to anyone that Martha Stewart is one of the shows hosts. After all, just check out her magazine for tons of great tips on Gardening.

Clipped is a topiary competition show. So, you get the chance to watch the competitors participate in different challenges related to topiary. It’s all about making different plants and the settings that they’re in look stunningly gorgeous through shearing and other techniques. I’ll never make a plant look like any of these but I enjoy watching the process of the art form!

## The Big Flower Fight

British reality TV shows are always a little bit hit or miss for me. They’re usually a little bit more serious, a little bit less of the silly drama you see on American TV shows. That can be a positive or a negative for me personally. In this case, I love it. No drama, just serious competition about how to use flowers to make a space beautiful.

AARP describes the show cheekily as “The Rose Parade meets Edward Scissorhands.” It’s really beautiful, though, to see how they use and shape flowers to create such original works of art. Every year here in San Francisco there’s a floral art display at the de Young Museum for about one week. I’ve never gone but I’ve always intended to and watching this show makes me want to prioritize doing so.

## The Instant Gardener

This is more like the classic “home makeover” show that you might watch on TV. However, it’s for garden makeovers. A team of three people shows up, takes a look at a sad garden, and spends a day fixing it up. It’s one of those shows that is satisfying to watch because there’s a problem and it’s solved with the span of one episodes. So, when I’m looking for a quick fix to cheer me up, this is a good one.

## Bonus: BBC’s Gardener’s World

I named this a “bonus” because I haven’t actually watched this show, yet, myself. I didn’t want to include shows I haven’t seen. However, in every blog post I saw about which shows are the best TV shows for gardeners, this one made the list. Apparently it’s a long-running British show featuring tips and tricks of all kinds for gardening. Have you ever seen it? What are your thoughts?

*Do you have any other favorite gardening TV shows that I missed?*

### Read More:

- 7 Reasons Why You Should Try Gardening
- 7 Financial Benefits of Backyard Gardening
- Does My Brown Thumb Make Gardening a Waste of Money?

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# Being a Beginner in the

# Garden

I've admitted to you in the past that I honestly have a bit of a brown thumb. During periods of depression, this can make me feel like I will never be able to grow a plant ever again. However, most of the time, I'm able to turn off that kind of thinking. I'm able to embrace the beauty of being a beginner at something. It's okay to be a beginner. And it's okay to always be an amateur at something. In fact, I think it can be a really beautiful thing.

## Being a Beginner Is Hard For Me

It's taken me a long time to learn how to NOT be good at things. Obviously, I don't mean that I'm naturally good at everything I try. Far from it. However, historically, I give up really easily at things I'm not immediately good at. School was always easy for me, so I pushed forward in that and excelled. Flute lessons and athletics were hard for me; I quit or didn't even begin.

## Learning How to Learn

Over time (I'm in my forties now!), I've learned how to embrace being a beginner. It started in school. It took me a really long time to comprehend the idea that school was a place for me to learn things, not to be automatically good at them. Since I had fit so well into traditional school growing up, it all came easily to me. I never realized I was there to learn hard things. Honestly, I didn't learn a whole lot from my Bachelors' degree either. I did the work, got the grades, moved on.

However, grad school was hard. I got my MA in Psychology. The school work wasn't hard at all. The papers and tests came easily to me. However, the actual experience of pushing myself and learning and growing and being part of a complex group dynamic was really, really hard for me. And I did it. And I'm prouder of that than of any grade I ever got.

## The Beauty of Being a Beginner

I've finally learned about how great it is to NOT know something but to want to learn it. I've learned that it's not only normal and okay to mistakes; it's great. Here are some of the reasons that it's beautiful to be a beginner, in gardening or any other pursuit:

- The pressure is off. You don't have to do this perfectly because YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW YET.
- The excitement is high. There is so much ahead to learn!
- You don't have preconceived notions. Or you do but you can let them go. Thus, you're more present in the experience.
- Hope, possibility, openness, curiosity … these are all things that it's possible to bring to the garden as a beginner. And you can bring this beginner's mind to the garden even if you've been gardening for a really long

time.
- The rewards feel huge! I feel good when I complete something I'm good at, of course. But I feel amazing when I succeed at something I'm not good at, yet!

So, I think it's wonderful to be a beginner in the garden. I think it's wonderful to stay an amateur. After all, I don't plan to do any professional gardening. Therefore, I'll never have to worry about striving for perfection, layering business over the hobby, etc. I have other things for that. A garden can just be a place to play.

*What are your thoughts on being a beginner? Is it hard for you? Easy and exciting? Both?*

## Read More:

- Quotes About the Benefits Of Gardening
- Pine Street Garden, San Francisco
- Could I Make Money With Worm Farming?