

Should I Use Enviro Ice On My Plants?



Every week, I receive food from Hungryroot. It's a great service through which you can get meal prep or just general groceries. Much of the food needs to stay cold. Therefore, they put cold packs inside the box. They use an option called Enviro Ice. You can dispose of it in many ways, including apparently by using it as plant food. Should I do that?

What Is Enviro Ice?

Here's what the Enviro Ice package looks like:



When it arrives, it's frozen. It works just like any other cold pack for food. Apparently, you can simply reuse it if you want to do that. However, I don't have a lot of use for cold packs. And I get one of these (which is probably about 9" x 12" every week. I certainly don't need that many. So I need to figure out other ways to use them.

Options for Reusing / Recycling Enviro Ice

Here's what the back of the package says:



All of this time, I've been doing the latter option. I leave the bag inside my sink until it's no longer frozen. Then I cut it open and let it drain into the sink. The first time that I tried it, I was worried that it would clog the sink. But true to [what the brand advertises](#), it does no such thing. It's designed specifically to go down the drain. So I drain it, rinse the bag, and recycle the bag.

However, as I was doing this habitually last week, I re-read the package. I noticed that the first option is actually to use it as plant food. So, I got curious about that. Should I feed Enviro Ice to plants instead of to the drain?

Enviro Ice For Plants

According to their website, Enviro Ice is the only product of its kind. It's a nitrogen-based product. This means that it's good for plants. They say that you can pour the gel directly onto the soil. Alternatively, you can dilute it with water. There's no particular benefit to the latter other than that it flows more easily.

They report that you get all of the benefits of nitrogen for your plants when you use this gel. It adds nutrients and improves growth. It's food for your plants. They say that you can use it for both indoor and outdoor plants.

What's My Hesitation?

All signs indicate that I should go ahead and try this in my own gardening efforts. So why am I hesitating at all? The truth is that I trust the product just fine, but I don't trust my own instincts when it comes to planting. As I've confessed to you in the past, I don't have a natural green thumb. I never really know what my plants want or need. I over-water and under-sun and all of the things that are bad for them.

So, what I'm worried about is that I won't use Enviro Ice properly. Will I give the plant too much of it and not realize what's happening until it's too late? Will it change the balance of other things I give the plant (water, light, etc.)? If so, will it be able to correct that?

The great thing about gardening, though, is that the stakes are low. I already have the product. I can try it and see what happens. I'll keep you posted.

Have you used Enviro Ice in gardening? What's your experience been?

Read More:

- [5 Reasons To Use Fish Amino Acid On Your Plants](#)
 - [4 Cost-Effective Organic Garden Fertilizers](#)
 - [Does My Brown Thumb Make Gardening a Waste of Money?](#)
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5 Cheap Ways to Self Water Plants



Some people love the ritual of watering their plants each day. However, many of us like to simplify our schedules by setting up systems whereby plants can self water. Moreover, there might be times when you need plants to water themselves, such as when you go on vacation. It's good to know some cheap ways to self water plants. Here are five ideas.

1. Upside Down Wine Bottle

Instead of putting your next empty wine bottle into the recycling bin, use it as a self-water device for your indoor plants. [The Garden Glove](#) explains that you:

- Rinse the wine bottle thoroughly.
- Fill it with water.
- Re-cork it or put the screw cap back on.
- Drill a hole in the center of the cork / cap.
- Turn the bottle upside down.
- Press it several inches down into the soil as close to the center of the pot as you can get.

That's all; it will self water over the next several days. This is a great tip especially if you're going away for a long weekend and just want the plants to be properly watered while you're gone.

2. Two Liter Soda Bottle

The Garden Glove also offers this option, which is one of the cheap ways to self water plants that are outside or indoors in larger containers. Here's what you do:

- Thoroughly rinse a 2 liter bottle.
- Cut the bottom off of the bottle.
- Punch holes randomly around the entire body of the bottle.
- Dig a hole near the plant's root system that's big enough to completely cover the bottle.
- Bury the bottle in this hole, with the neck side up. You should surround the entire bottle with soil except for the top of it.
- Pour water into the top (which is the cut bottom, remember) until the vessel is full.
- It will now self-water.

3. Bathtub Plants

If you're looking for cheap ways to self water plants while you're on vacation, consider putting them in the bathtub. [ProFlowers](#) explains:

- Fill the bathtub with several inches of water.
- Lay a towel down in the water.
- Place plants, in their pots, on top of the towel in the water.

That's it. The plants should soak up the water while you're away.

4. String/ Rope Wicks

Many of the DIY methods of self watering use some variation on this. The idea is that you have a vessel of water near the plant. You insert string or rope into the water. The other end of the string or rope goes into the soil near the plant. The plant will then drink what it needs through the straw of the string.

5. Plastic Bag Bubble

ProFlowers also suggests this one. Here's how it works:

- Put wooden stakes in the corners of the plant's container, tucked into the soil.
- Water your plant as normal.
- Wrap a plastic bag around the four stakes. The bag should be slightly bigger than the plant itself. It should not touch the plant's leaves.
- Move the plant so that it's not in direct sunlight.

This should work like a tiny greenhouse.

Read More:

- [5 Frugal DIY Drip Irrigation Systems](#)
- [Harvesting Rainwater for the Frugal Gardener](#)
- [Keeping the Garden Well-Watered: 5 Tried and True Methods](#)

Sutton Foster's Tomato

Growing Tips



I just finished reading Sutton Foster's book, "[Hooked: How Crafting Saved My Life](#)." I got it because she's crocheting on the cover of the book and that's my go-to craft. It's also her go-to craft, however she enjoys many other crafts as well. She even mentions gardening in the book. Specifically, she talks about the memories of her dad growing tomato plants. Moreover, she provides his top ten tips for growing "the perfect sandwich-sized fruit."

Is Gardening a Craft? An Art? A Hobby?

I don't particularly delineate between these things, and I get the sense that Sutton Foster doesn't either. She definitely knows the difference between a hobby and a job. She's a television and Broadway actress as a profession. She uses crafting to calm, soothe, restore, heal her, something she's

been doing since she was a kid. She mentions cross-stitch, knitting, collage, glass art, painting, drawing, baking, and gardening throughout her book. In terms of the roles they play in her life, they seem relatively interchangeable. Gardening can be a craft, an art, a hobby. Of course, it can also be a job, and then it's a little bit different.

Tomato Garden Memories

Foster had a complex childhood, and her parents had a complicated, pained relationship. But she remembers gardening as one of the things that they all enjoyed together. Her dad was the one who loved to garden. He planted a variety of different things, and she planted with him. Her mother got involved a bit as well, collecting the seeds in the fall for replanting in the spring. And they all enjoyed the tomato sandwiches made from the tomatoes grown in their own garden.

10 Tomato Growing Tips

In brief, here are Sutton Foster's ten tomato-growing tips, which are actually her "Papa Bob's Tips."

1. It all starts with great soil.

This is true of most things that you plant in your garden, of course. Don't neglect this part of gardening; it's foundational.

2. Pick the right tomatoes.

She recommends beefsteak tomatoes. They're hearty and perfect for those sandwiches her family loved to eat.

3. Plant tomatoes in the sun.

Specifically, she recommends a spot that gets 4-6 hours of

daily sunlight. Of course, this depends on the tomatoes that you choose to plant as well as environmental factors. But it's a good starting point.

4. Plant tomatoes to grow upwards.

You want to use a [DIY trellis](#), tomato cages, or other support to assist the vines of your tomato plants to grow vertically.

5. Focus on growing the main vines of the tomato plant.

Foster explains that tomato plants have lots of little extra growth shoots that try to grow off of the main vine. However, you should pull those off. This allows the plant to concentrate its energy on great growth along the main vine. I didn't actually know this tip myself.

6. Avoid overwatering your tomato plants.

This is one of the most common causes of tomatoes that [aren't growing properly](#).

7. Use fertilizer.

She recommends a name brand liquid fertilizer that you apply every two weeks. However, you can make a DIY fertilizer or choose your own favorite. Follow the instructions that are relevant to your specific tomatoes as well as to the fertilizer you're using.

8. Fight off bugs.

Bugs love tomato plants. They also often kill them. There are many methods of dealing with them, of course. Foster recommends planting marigolds near your tomato plants because they are a natural insect repellent. Furthermore, she points out that if you pop the head off of marigolds at the end of

the season, the seeds are neatly stored right there for you to collect and replant in the spring.

9. Pick tomatoes when they are not quite ripe.

Why? Because the plant still has more opportunity to grow additional tomatoes on that vine. However, it needs the space and ability to do so.

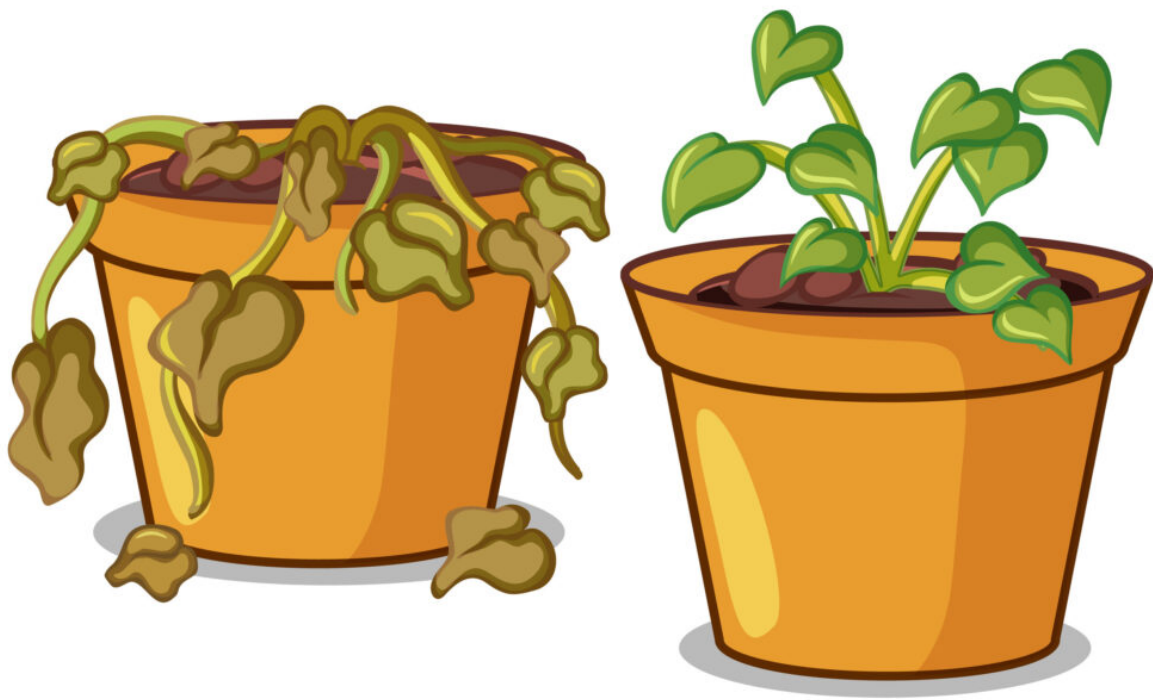
10. Ripen tomatoes on the counter.

Place them in the sun. Let them fully ripen. Enjoy!

Read More:

- [Dealing With Tomato Blight](#)
 - [Reasons Why Tomato Foliage Curl](#)
 - [To Prune or Not to Prune: Keeping Tomatoes in Check](#)
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6 Tips To Revive Wilted Plants



I mentioned recently that I have a little bit of a [brown thumb](#). However, I've kept at gardening and learning about plants. I've improved over time. Along the way, I've picked up lots of tips to revive wilted plants. I wanted to share some of those with you today.

What Causes Plants to Wilt?

I made one of the biggest rookie gardening mistakes for a really long time. I assumed that if a little water is good for plants, then a lot of water is better. Therefore, I would always overwater just about everything. Many of my plants died as a result.

Many [different things can cause](#) plants to wilt, including:

- Water imbalance – both too much water and too little can cause wilting
- Light imbalance – too much sun or too little sun creates problems
- Letting the plant get too hot
- Over-fertilizing your plants

- Disease – various fungi, bacteria, and viruses can impact plant health
- The plant needs a bigger container to grow properly

Tips to Revive Wilted Plants

The most important of all tips to revive wilted plants is to identify the cause of the problem. Check the potential causes above. Then correct accordingly. This could mean moving your plant into more or less sunlight, repotting it, or changing the way you water it.

Here are some additional tips to revive wilted plants:

1. Learn about [Overwatering](#)

- Research the specific water needs of each plant in your garden.
- If the soil is moist and dark, the plant might not need water.
- Water at the base of the plant, not from overhead.
- Make sure that the water is able to drain properly.
- Water during the day, not at night.

2. Consider Underwatering, Too

If you're not watering the plant enough, then correct accordingly. The above tips will assist with that as well.

3. Give Plants The Right Amount of Sunlight

Again, research what your specific plants need in terms of sunlight. However, even plants that call for full sun might need shade if they're wilting. Therefore, try adding shade to see if your plants heal and grow as a result. In particular, give shade to plants that appear to be getting too hot,

whether or not they're getting the right amount of light.

4. Try a Fungicide

You might have to rule out fungi, bacteria, etc. Start by trying a natural fungicide on your plants. You can easily DIY one of these to try at home. From there, you can explore options for treating various bacteria, etc., that are unique to different plants and regions.

5. Re-plant Your Plants

There are a few different reasons to try this option. First of all, the plant might have outgrown its pot. If so, the wilting could be due to a need for more space. Second, though, the soil might be problematic. Therefore, replanting in new soil could help resolve the problem. This is true for plants in pots as well as those in the ground.

6. Watch, Try, Watch Again

Ultimately, let your plants tell you what they need. Look at the issue. Try something above to treat the problem. If it doesn't work, watch some more, then try something new. Gardening includes trial and error. The more you listen to your plants, the better you'll get at it.

Read More:

- [5 Factors That Affect Plant Growth](#)
 - [Troubleshoot The Seed Starting Process](#)
 - [Dealing with Tomato Blight](#)
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DIY Squash Trellis Under \$10



Growing squash is a great idea. There are many great squash varieties to feed your family. However, you want to plan ahead when growing squash. If you don't, then this plant can take over your entire garden. In particular, you'll want to train your squash to grow on a trellis. Here are some great ideas for how to make a DIY squash trellis under \$10.

Why You Need a Squash Trellis

[Rural Sprout](#) explains that squash will absolutely overrun a garden if you plant this vegetable without a trellis. Like an octopus, they'll reach their tentacles all over the place.

This can wreak havoc on your other plants. Therefore, you want to use a squash trellis. You can train the squash to grow up a vertical trellis. According to Rural Sprout, the benefits of vertical gardening for squash plants include:

- Saves space, allowing for more squash growth while retaining space to grow other plants
- Keeps squash fruit off of the ground, improving the fruit and the plants as a whole (yes, squash is a fruit)
- It's easier to harvest squash grown vertically on a trellis
- The vertical design gives you opportunities for enhancing your garden's aesthetic design

Squash To Grow on a Trellis

There are many different types of squash that you can grow in your backyard garden. [Gardening Know How](#) says that some of the best squash for vertical gardening include acorn squash, delicata, yellow summer squash and zucchini. You can grow other squash vertically but the heavier varieties will require stronger trellis reinforcement.

How to DIY Squash Trellis Under \$10

You can purchase a squash trellis. However, frugal gardeners can easily make a DIY squash trellis under \$10. Here are some great examples of how to do so:

Put some basic woodworking skills to the test to create this DIY Squash Trellis under \$10. As you can see, you'll make some simple cuts in your wood. You'll actually use 10 1x2x96 furring strips, which cost less than \$1 each at most home improvement stores. Assemble the smaller and larger pieces as shown in the video, propping them up together to create the squash trellis. As long as you already have the saw and drill,

this is a very affordable project.HJ

Here's another great example of how to DIY a squash trellis. In this example, you buy 5' stakes designed for growing tomatoes and other plants. You attach them to the planter at an angle so that the squash (or in this example, the cucumbers) can grow upwards at that angle. Then you build out the frame to create a fuller trellis. You add wires horizontally within the frame. The vine tendrils from your squash will climb those wires. This is another super simple project under \$10.

Tips For Growing Squash

Here are some additional tips for vertical squash gardening:

- You can adapt these DIY ideas to any wood or fencing that you already have at home. It's great to repurpose those items.
- Secure your vertical trellis posts deep in the ground. You want the bottom of the trellis to be able to bear a lot of vertical weight as the squash plants grow.
- Make sure that your plants get plenty of sunlight.
- Train the plants to grow where you want them to by guiding the vines onto the trellis wires as they grow.
- For heavier squash plants, either grow them on the ground or add slings to support the squash as they grow. Otherwise they can break off at the stems. Watch as they grow in size to get a sense of whether or not you'll need this additional support.

Read More:

- [5 Winter Squash Varieties for the Frugal Gardener Short on Space](#)
- [7 Plants You Can Direct Seed](#)
- [Is It Worth It To Grow Your Own Pumpkins?](#)

8 Uses of Baking Soda in Gardening



8 USES OF BAKING SODA

in Gardening

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Baking soda is one of the most amazing, affordable products available to us. Hopefully, you're already using baking soda for cleaning throughout your home. If not, then you're

spending more money than you should on household cleaners. And today let's talk about how baking soda's benefits don't stop there. There are so many uses of baking soda in gardening. Here are eight big ones:

1. Baking Soda for Soil Testing

Everything that you grow needs to grow in suitable soil. The soil's pH level is one of the most critical factors. Therefore, you should do [soil testing](#) before you plant. Baking soda provides an easy, cheap way to do that. Here's what to do:

- Take a tablespoon of soil and place it in a container.
- Add a little bit of distilled water until the soil is mud.
- Add a little bit of baking soda.
- Watch.
- Does the soil fizz? If so, then your soil has an acidic pH level.

Bonus tip: If the soil doesn't fizz with baking soda, then you should do a second test. Take a fresh tablespoon of the soil. Add distilled vinegar to it. If it fizzes now, then your soil has an alkaline pH level. However, if neither the baking soda nor the vinegar cause fizzing, then you have soil with neutral pH.

2. Boost Your Plant Fertilization

[Balcony Garden Web](#) has several great suggestions for using baking soda in gardening. For example, they suggest adding baking soda to fertilize slow-growing, dull-appearing plants. They say that you should mix one teaspoon of baking soda and Epsom salt with 1/2 teaspoon ammonia in one gallon of water. Then add approximately one quart of that solution to each plant you want to fertilize. You should see them grow faster and

brighter in no time.

3. Make Your Tomatoes Taste Better

This is one of my favorite tips from Balcony Garden Web. They explain that if you simply sprinkle a little bit of baking soda around the base of your tomato plants, you'll be able to grow sweeter tomatoes. How is this possible? The soil absorbs the baking soda, lowering the natural acidity levels of the plant itself. Baking soda costs so little and yet it can work so much magic!

4. Get Rid of Garden Pests

It's always so difficult to decide how to handle garden pests like worms and slugs. Some of them don't do that much damage and you might decide to leave them alone. Others, however, can wreak havoc in your garden. If you don't want to lose your plants, then you have to find some way to deal with them.

Baking soda can provide a solution. It's eco-friendly and generally kind to your plants. However, it works as a pesticide. You can put it directly on slugs and gnats to kill them. Alternatively, you can make a solution that you spray on your plants to keep pests away.

5. Uses of Baking Soda on Plant Leaves

Did you know that if you have indoor household plants, you're supposed to clean them? That's right, household dust can settle on them and ruin them. A baking soda solution is a simple way to clean those leaves.

Even outdoors, though, you might find that baking soda helps the leaves of your plants. For example, a baking soda solution

can help prevent fungus growth on plant leaves.

6. Add Baking Soda to Cut Flowers

Do you grow flowers in your backyard garden? If so, then perhaps you sometimes cut them and put them in a vase for yourself or to gift to others. Make those flowers last as long as possible by adding just a little bit of baking soda to the water inside that vase.

7. Deodorize Compost

Hopefully, you have compost for your garden. It's such a waste if you don't. However, the smell of a compost pile might have deterred you. If that's the case, then baking soda can come to the rescue. Just sprinkle a little bit on top of the compost regularly. The smell will go away. You can then reap all the benefits of composting in your garden.

8. Cleaning Around the Garden

The plants are the most important part of your garden. However, they're not the only part. You have gardening tools, statues, chairs, etc. Make sure that you keep all of these things clean for the best garden experience. Baking soda makes a great natural cleaner for all of these.

Read More:

- [100 Alternative Uses for Baking Soda](#)
 - [How to Use Baking Soda for Weed Control](#)
 - [How I Feel About the Hunting of Garden Pests](#)
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Making Your Pumpkin Last: 5 Tips



It's fall ya'll! My favorite season! Unfortunately, it's been a lot warmer than years past thus far. And while that may be good news for those wanting to extend the gardening season,

it's bad news for fall decor.

Whether you put out pumpkins to celebrate fall or Halloween, they're a fun way to accessorize the front stoop. I think I've put out a pumpkin every year of my life, except for last year when Halloween was virtually canceled where I live.

Sadly, the unusually warm weather means that pumpkins are rotting faster than ever. So besides putting it out at the last minute, what are some tips for making your pumpkin last longer?

Making your pumpkin last longer

It's time to carve, paint, and otherwise decorate pumpkins! But if you want to decorate this season, you'll have to battle both warm weather and hungry squirrels.

Here are some tips for keeping that pumpkin around until November 1st:

Pick the right pumpkin.

Choose a pumpkin that's free of holes, scrapes, cuts, dents, or odd dark spots. Blemishes will cause your pumpkin to rot quickly.

If you have the option, pick your own pumpkin! (This is also way more fun than grabbing one from the grocery store). Since it'll be going from the field straight to your home, it won't get bounced around like pumpkins that travel long distances.

Stop touching it.

The more you touch a pumpkin, the higher the chances are that you'll nick or scratch it in some way. The more cuts and scratches a pumpkin has, the faster it'll rot into oblivion.

That means carving also speeds up the rotting process. If

you're having trouble keeping pumpkins looking good-as-new, consider painting this [squash-family](#) fruit instead of cutting into it.

Put it in the right spot.

Plop a pumpkin in a moist patch of dirt, and you'll end up with a soggy, mushy mess in no time. The ideal spot for a pumpkin is dry and out of direct sunlight—a covered porch, for example.

Dry it out.

To make sure the kiddies get to admire your pumpkin carving skills at Halloween, make sure to thoroughly clean out the insides of a pumpkin and then [dry it out](#) before slicing and dicing. Less goopy, moist parts mean fewer opportunities for mold to grow.

Grab the vaseline.

Rubbing a dried, carved pumpkin with vaseline helps seal the surfaces and prevent mold growth.

Bottom line

Your pumpkin will rot eventually. And while some of these things can slow the process, others are out of your control (like outdoor temps and humidity). Consider taking it in every night if you really want to protect that pumpkin—especially from [squirrels](#) and other nibblers.

Another way to deter hungry pests is to keep the pumpkin off the ground. Use a small table or another elevated surface to keep it out of reach. It's not a foolproof protection method, but it's better than nothing!