

Shrubs From A Pile Of Sticks



From this pathetic little bunch of twigs, given a few years, I will have a couple of nice rows of hydrangeas. I grabbed the handful of trimmings out of the compost pile when helping my mom in her yard this spring.



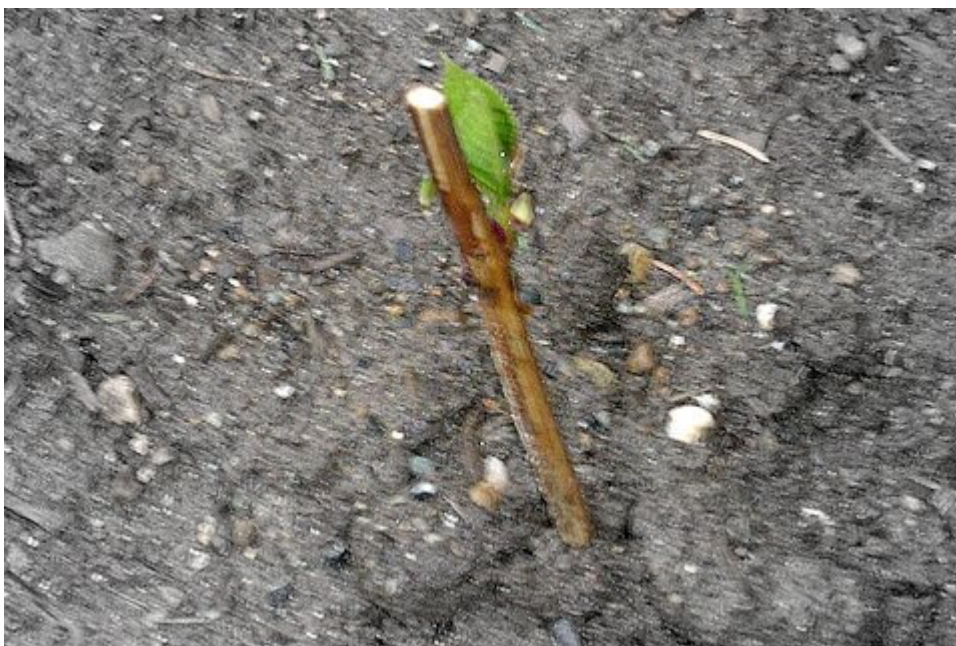
The second photo shows the same bunch, this time prepared into ready to plant "cuttings". I don't profess to be an authority on this subject, but I sure have come up with a yard full of

free plants using my method.

I start by looking at the branch I have rescued, and determining where the buds are forming, or where the leaves are located. I cut on the diagonal and try to make it so each “cutting” has one of the bud intersections for the root and one above ground for the beginning of my new plant.

If I’m working with a branch that has large leaves, I cut the 2 leaves that will be above ground in half, so the little start doesn’t have to work so hard on leaves, but it can concentrate on putting out some new roots.

In the past, I have gone to the trouble (& expense) of trying a rooting hormone to dip the ends in, but haven’t noticed any difference in my starts. Both end up with a nice plant; one for free and one using a fairly expensive product. No guesswork needed as to which method I prefer!



The last photo shows one of my new starts in the ground – they were there less than a week at the time of the picture. New leaves are beginning to unfurl which is a promise of a new garden addition (you must remember that “free” gardening often requires patience as the reward does not come as quickly this way as with buying plants that are already mature).

I have used this technique on many woody, branch type shrubs and plants such as forsythia, laurel, etc. If the method is free, what have you got to lose?

Free From Landscape Firms

A phone book and your local newspaper can be great tools to get your garden going and growing this spring. No, you're not going to shred them & use them for mulch (although, this is not a bad idea).

What you want to do is look up the landscape firms in your local area. Make an effort to contact as many as you can until you come up with at least one willing to "work" with you. And, no, you're not going to pay them to work in your yard.

Landscape firms have a problem that you can help them solve. In their work, they have a lot of yard waste and plants to dispose of and they are usually forced to pay fees in order to get rid of these items. If given the choice, most would rather give the "waste" away for free than to pay fees to have it hauled away. This is where you come in.

All you do is contact the landscape firms and see if they have items that you need that they need to get rid of. What is their "waste" may be exactly what you are looking to use in your garden. By taking the time to find them and to introduce yourself (and your garden), you can come to their aide.

If you are looking for specific garden items, you can ask for specifics. An easier way may be to just come right out and ask if they have anything they are paying to get rid of. Either way, you stand to gain "goodies" for your garden and they stand to save some dump fees. Most landscape firms have the

following items after finishing a job:

- Mulch, especially if you live in an area where lawns are being mowed. Just think of all that fresh grass mulching away in your garden beds, or between the rows of your veggies. If you've got room for the company's truck to come in and dump a large pile, and you don't live on the other side of no where, this might be a win-win situation for you and the landscapers.
- Cuttings. Again, this depends on your area and time of year, but think of all the plants that are being cut back, pruned and trimmed back. With a little work and a couple years worth of patience, you will see new shrubs and trees for your effort.
- Plants. Most commercial accounts pay for their landscape company to switch out their plant displays regularly. Where better for the old plants to find a new home than your garden?

Be warned, you'll more than likely receive a number of "no thanks," "we already donate to someone else" or "that would be too much work." Don't be discouraged. You can explain how you are willing to come to them to pick through the old plants, grab the cuttings before they hit the dumpster or bring trash cans for them to fill with grass clippings. The easier you make it for them, the more likely that they will let you help yourself to their waste. If they still say no, thank them for their time and move onto the next company on your list.

I've had a landscape company agree to dump a truckload of their trimmings in my yard with no extra work for them. In this case they were happy to do so because then they didn't even have any dump fees to pay. It meant that I did have the job of digging through pile to find the items worth saving and then preparing the rest of the pile to be used as mulch, but it's almost like Christmas uncovering an armload of hydrangea trimmings (how many plants can I get from an armload?), the equivalent of flats of bedding plants or enough ground cover

starts that I can share (and trade) with all my friends.

Grab your list and get your garden growing!

Save Money – Gardening

The Earth Laughs in Flowers
– Ralph Waldo Emerson







Gardening can be fun, enjoyable and downright expensive if you're not careful. This site is dedicated to bring you easy to implement gardening tips and techniques that can help you save money while keeping all your plants in tip-top shape.

Making your garden beautiful on a budget is not nearly as difficult as it may first appear. You don't need to have the fanciest plants or the shiniest garden tool to make your garden a sight to see. It does take a bit of organization and planning, but this will result in you having a garden full of vegetables that you can place on your table at a low cost.

From keeping your gardening tools in good condition to learning how to trade seeds to get a large variety of vegetables at virtually no cost, there are a lot of ideas within these pages to help you keep your gardening and plant care needs at a minimum.

If you have your own frugal gardening tips that you'd like to share with others, please [email us](#) so that we can add your suggestions to our growing list.

Garden For Free



Is it possible to have a lush flower garden, produce your own veggie patch or just add to the landscaping around your home all for free? Absolutely. One of the easiest ways to do this is to participate in your local chapter of Freecycle. This is a Yahoo list, available at FreeCycle.org. The organization began in 2003 and now boasts close to 3500 chapters, or communities, as they are called and over 2 million subscribers.

The goal of Freecycle is to limit adding to the landfills by

recycling usable items. Posts need to be free, legal and appropriate for all ages. Freecycle: a simple solution to get rid of your no longer needed items and a fantastic way to acquire things on your wish list...all for free (minus the gas to go pick the things up!)

Once you have joined the group, please read your communities rules & regs. For example, my local group limits the number of WANTED posts you may list per month, as well as all participants are asked to list at least as many OFFERS as WANTEDS.

As soon as you're comfortably at home on your local Freecycle list, start posting according to your groups guidelines. Begin small, as you will want to follow through on all posts you receive (in order to be a responsible list member). How about:

WANTED: Strawberry starts/ Lake Stevens

I'll be happy to take your extra plants off your hands, now that many of you will be thinning your strawberry patch. Please let me know if I can assist with the digging too, not afraid of hard work here! Thanks much for freecycling!

Try to time your posts to the gardening tasks currently happening in your area (check our lists here or online for monthly gardening "to do" lists, or your local papers' gardening column) Local gardeners usually hate to throw out good plants and would much rather share with others.

If you're really new to gardening and don't know what you want, you can post something general like:

WANTED: Outdoor plants/ Lake Stevens

I'm new to gardening. Have dirt, shovel and ready to work. Please let me know

if you have plants, bushes, trees to share. I would love any help you could give to get my garden growing!

Be sure to send thank you notes to anyone you get plants from and always offer to take any other excess they may have. Strike up a friendship, tell them your interests regarding plants, offer to help in their garden with larger type chores needing a couple people, ask for advice regarding the plants they did give you and any other gardening questions you may have. Connections like these are the first steps to getting your garden to grow.

So how much did we spend on this so far? A new strawberry patch – Cost: just the gas to go pick up the plants! The same is true with the New Gardener post. You could get your vehicle full of plants for no cost at all. Remember to be flexible, be thankful and grab that shovel and get to work!

Gardening 10 Commandments

Every gardener has some commandments that they hold dear and follow. These are my 10 commandments for frugal gardening, as well as for [beginning gardeners](#) who are just getting started:

1. **Thou shalt have fun:** If you aren't having fun while gardening, find another hobby
2. **Thou shalt save money, not spend money:** If you are planting a frugal garden, the bounty you receive should ultimately save you money over the amount you put into the garden
3. **Thou shalt not acquire needy plants:** Nothing makes it into my garden if it has specific needs or is just constantly needy

(I sat through a garden club lecture & demo once where the speaker included the word critical more than a half dozen times...nothing goes in my garden that has a word like "critical" attached to it!)

4. Thou shalt not acquire fleeting plants: Anything I plant needs to stick with me. In other words, it can't be a fleeting, flash in the garden bed sort of annual. No spot-of-color sort of event in my garden. Plants have to come back again and again; and on their own too!

5. Thou shalt keep digging to a minimum: The less digging the better. I'm all for raised beds, container gardening and getting anyone else to do any necessary digging!

6. Thou shalt be willing to try new things: I will try anything once. I know, this is a slight contradiction to Commandment #3, but it is my garden & I reserve the right to try anything once. I can always pass it along to someone else if it doesn't behave itself and it may turn out to be something that is perfect for my garden that I can use again and again.

7. Thou shalt not acquire thirsty plants: Besides my veggie garden area, I don't want anything in my garden that will expire if it doesn't get a daily drink of water. Things need to hold their own here as I don't have a drip or irrigation system and I just don't seem to be the kind of gardener that remembers to water everything at exactly the right time. Plants with good root systems will win out every time, over those that are more delicate.

8. Thou shalt favor plants with multiple uses: Plants that do two things, instead of just one, will win a spot in my garden every time. Shrubs that are green all year and flower sometime during the year are great, as are trees that show off early spring blossoms as well as provide shade during the summer. Plants that are interesting in my borders or cottage gardens

plus provide veggies for the table are favorites and any plant that has a fragrance is a sure addition.

9. Thou shalt not hide your garden in the back corner: The older I get, the closer my gardens get to the house. When I began gardening, most of my beds were in the back forty; nice because there was lots of room and they could be interesting...or not. No one but me usually saw them. With my move to this current property, my gardens are located right outside my front door. This was initially due to not having any other ground ready to plant plus the proximity to a water faucet.

I will never do the back forty kind of gardening again. This is just way too much fun. Everyone that comes to my house, from family to the UPS driver, has some sort of comment about the gardens. And, since people are always visiting; I'm so much more interested in working to keep the gardens up to snuff!

10. Thou shalt disturb weeds often: My last commandment has to be the advice I received from a great old gardener friend: Disturb the little, almost invisible weed seeds on a regular basis (read this as daily) and there will be no need to spend hours weeding. So true. The more time I spend just cultivating the dirt in between the plants & rows, the fewer weeds I ever see, the little weed sprouts just get too discouraged to grow.

Grow Plants From Cuttings

One of the best ways to save money when gardening is to not purchase plants for your garden in the first place. There are a number of ways that this can be accomplished. One of the best and easiest ways to do this is to make use of plant

cuttings.

Learn to grow plants from cuttings. There are a variety of ways to prepare cuttings depending on the plant so a little study is necessary. Timing is also of great importance to the success of getting the plant cutting to generate on its own. That being said, it's not difficult to accomplish once you know the correct procedure for your type of plant. Spending some time to study the best way to go about using cuttings from the plants you want will help ensure that you have a beautifully full garden.

The best part about cuttings is that there are a large variety of plants that can be grown from them. It also means that you can have a whole new plant for free just by snipping off a piece of an already grown plant. Some easy plants to start with include mint, red valerian, hydrangea, pincushion, geraniums and scented geraniums.

In addition, consider getting cuttings from the food that you buy from the grocery store to eat. Many times you can slice off a small piece of the food and grow an entirely new plant while still eating the majority of it for your meal.