

Reusing Stuff In Your Garden

Earth Day isn't just a day in April to frugal gardeners. No matter what month it is, we're always on the look out for ways to tread lightly in our little corner of the world.

Here is a short list of some of the items which many people throw away that I reuse in some way while I am gardening. By no means is this a complete listing, but it is a good starting point to get your creative juices flowing:

Plastic knives: I love these. I've always been a terribly lazy gardener and in the past I never marked the plants and seeds when I've stuck them in the ground. I have this problem no more. With my permanent marker and a handful of plastic knives, I've got plant markers for everything this season.

Old panty hose: I like cutting the legs off these and using them to tie up plants like tomatoes. These are ideal because they stretch a bit so the plants aren't held rigidly to the trellis.

Clear plastic clam shell type containers: I use the clamshell packaging for muffins and such by poking a drainage hole in the bottom, filling with potting soil and planting seeds in these. Once done, close the top down and you have an instant mini greenhouse. If it gets too warm, simply open the lid. When the plants get large enough, you can transplant them to the garden, rinse out the makeshift greenhouse and store it away for next year.

Shower curtains: I use a couple of old shower curtains that have been around for years. They are extremely handy for transplanting mature plants. I hate to get garden soil on my lawn since that usually means small rocks meeting the lawn mower, so I spread the shower curtain out next to the plant that is going to be moved or get divided. All the dirt that gets dug up is piled onto the shower curtain. If I'm going to

move the plant, or perform a bit of surgery on it, a second shower curtain is handy too. I'll use it like a skid to move the plant from place to place, eliminating the need to pick it up at all. Then when I'm done with projects like this, I can pick up the edges and send the dirt directly where I want back into the garden. No dirt on the lawn and the project is finished without having to shovel all the dirt back again.

Old pop cans: I've used these for years in the bottoms of all of my planters and containers. If you fill the bottom third of a container with slightly bent / crushed pop cans, you can use less potting soil when planting. This will give you a lighter pot when finished and costs less per pot. The cans allow space at the bottom of the pot for drainage, so there is need to keep a supply of gravel for this purpose either.

Empty plastic pop bottles: These are wonderful to make a drip water system for hard to water plants. I have a couple areas with plants where the water runs right off if I use the hose or a sprinkler. By leaving the cap on the bottle, and cutting off the bottom, you can create a drip system. It's your choice whether you want to put in the garden on watering day or just leave it behind the plant and out of sight.

I poke a couple holes in the shoulder of the bottle, then bury the top of the bottle along side the plant that needs watering. Fill the bottle and let the water slowly seep out at root level and the water run off problem is solved. Depending on the area in my garden, I've used both the green colored plastic and the clear ones. Chose whichever shows less in relation to the plant and the location.

Broken flower pots: If a pot still has one side that is good, these make cute additions to the garden. Bury the broken part and plant inside the "cave" that is created. These broken pots are a good way to highlight particular plants or to tuck in little bits of tiny ground cover.

Broken garden tools: You can stick the handle end in the ground, leaving the shovel or rake head visible. You can then train a vine up the handle or use the new “stake” to tie up a plant.

As you can see, there are a lot of ways to use various objects that would normally end up in the landfill as part of your garden. We all should make a conscious effort to celebrate Earth Day every month by reusing some of these familiar items in our garden. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle should all be familiar words to a gardener. Other helpful hints can be found for the garden can be found at [Homeclick](#).