Are Old Tires Toxic to Plants?



Some people like to use old tires in their gardening. However, you might wonder, “are old tires too to plants?” It’s important to think about those things, especially if you eat food from your garden.

How To Use Old Tires In Your Garden

There are so many great, fun ways to use old tires in a garden. You can create all kinds of fun garden decor and art like that shown above. Other ways to use old tires in your garden include:

- Hang a tire swing from a tree.
- Build a small playground for your kids or pets with old tires.
- Fill the center of tires with soil and plant in there

for a unique plant bed.
- Hang tires to create shelving for a vertical garden.
- Build chairs, tables, and other lawn furniture from recycled tires.
- Use tires to create a big, dramatic garden border or fence or edge a pathway in your garden.
- Stack tires to create a retaining wall.

Are Old Tires Toxic to Plants?

Lots of people like the options above for their gardens. They're fun. They keep tires out of landfills. It's a great way to make new use of something old. But, are old tires toxic to plants?

There's actually been a lot of debate about this in the gardening community over the years. Although there's been some research, we still don't have a clear answer that's absolutely definitive. On one hand, tires do obviously contain harmful chemicals that are toxic to humans. These chemicals leach into the soil over time. On the other hand, the leaching process is so slow, particularly on really old tires that have already done most of their chemical off-gassing during years on the road, that they're probably not actually harmfully toxic to most humans.

That's the argument on either side. If you ask specifically "are old tires toxic to plants," then the answer is basically no. The plants seem to still thrive. But if you want to know if they're toxic to you if you eat plants grown in them, the answer isn't as simple. Likely a little bit yes, enough to harm you – who knows?

If you have small children that play in the garden, pets that dig and romp in the garden, or you grow food in your garden, then you might want to err on the side of assuming that they could potentially be toxic.

Alternatives to Old Tires in the Garden

If you want to be better safe than sorry, then you might want to consider alternatives to using old tires in the garden. Lucy Bradley recommends upcycling wood in the garden instead. Specifically, she recommends non-treated wood, ACQ pressure-treated wood, and naturally rot-resistant wood. You can use wood to build planters, raised beds, fences, vertical gardens, and playgrounds in the garden. The important thing is that you make sure you choose wood that hasn't been exposed to chemical treatments.

Likewise, you can upcycle stone, concrete, and bricks. Again, you just want to make sure that these recycled materials weren't first exposed to chemicals like lead-based paint or asbestos. Think of it this way: if you wouldn't use it in your house then you probably don't want to use it in your garden.

Read More:

- 5 Reasons To use Fish Amino Acids on Your Plants
- Frugal Container Garden
- The Number One Tenant of Frugal Gardening