

Reuse and Repurpose: 10 Garden Activity Ideas

Time to Complete: 30+ minutes

Grade Level: Preschool to High School

Location: Indoor and Outdoor

Season: All Seasons



Overview

Teaching kids how to reuse and repurpose unneeded or unwanted items rather than send them to a recycling center or landfill provides them with a solid foundation for thinking critically about consumerism, waste management, and sustainable living. Encouraging them to turn 'trash' to 'treasure' helps them see products through new eyes and may be a key to a greener future. In this activity you will discover garden activities that provide opportunities to reuse and repurpose common household items.

Materials:

Varies by activity

Instructions:

The following garden activities provide opportunities to reuse/repurpose common household items that may otherwise land in the trash or recycling bins.

Plant a terrarium. Large, clear plastic containers that are used to sell things like pretzels, rice, cheese puffs, and animal crackers make excellent vessels to [make your own terrarium](#).

Build a homemade hydroponic unit. Soda bottles, milk cartons, and butter and yogurt containers can all be used to have some hydroponic fun. Check out these ideas:

- [Soda Bottle Hydroponic System](#)
- [Simple Straw Aeration Hydroponic System](#)
- [Exploring Hydroponics](#)

Make your own seed-starting trays. Seeds can be started in any kind of shallow container (2 to 3 inches deep) with drainage holes. Instead of purchasing special-seed starting trays, search the kitchen for alternatives. You can use something as simple as an egg carton or yogurt containers with holes punched in the bottoms for drainage. To-go and take-home food containers with clear lids also work well as they come with their own humidity tent.

Find more information about [indoor seed starting](#).

Design cut flower arrangements. Small glass jars make excellent containers for sharing the joy of your garden with others through little cut flower bouquets. Baby food, pickle, and candle jars are examples of jars perfect for the job.

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Construct a garden activity box. Use old shoe boxes to store fun supplies you use in the garden, like art materials, magnifying glasses, and garden journals. Keeping your supplies in one spot will make it easy to grab and go at garden time. Check out this [Garden Art Box activity](#) for ideas.

Install weed block in the garden. Cardboard boxes can be an environmentally sound way to help control weeds in your garden. Use at the bottom of raised beds under the soil and along pathways under mulch. Over time the boxes will naturally decompose and become incorporated into the soil, unlike plastic-based weed cloth.

Craft some garden observation binoculars. Young gardeners especially like to turn garden time into an adventure. Make binoculars from empty paper towel and toilet paper rolls for a simple and fun garden tool that will help them focus their eyes in the garden.

Create seed paper. Old paper can be turned into [new paper](#). Add seeds and you have a great gift to share too!

Press flowers and leaves. When is the last time you used a phone book? Most of us rely on electronic tools to find addresses now, but who doesn't have a stack of phone books on a shelf somewhere? Phone books are excellent for [pressing flowers and leaves](#) onto paper, which can then be used for all kinds of crafts.

Make greeting cards. Order seeds from a catalog or online once, and you will most likely find seed catalogs appearing in your mailbox on a regular basis. Seed catalogs are filled with beautiful pictures which can be used to [make your own greeting cards](#).

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