

Garden Section



Using recycled items adds to garden decor

By Karen Krien

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Margaret Bucholtz is always looking for something unique for her garden. She has a trike her mother rode as a child, an old mailbox turned into a bird house, an old rickety step ladder with old shoes filled with "hens and chickens" plants, an old binder seat and wagon tires that belonged to her parents, an old water pump with a bucket (holes in the bottom) water feature that recycles water, and, on the fence, there is a rake head attached to the fence with tools hanging from it.

This winter, she looked around the shop. She had a variety of items, from several old doors, picket fence, old buckets, chairs and containers. She had been thinking about building a potting bench and she had just the items she needed.

The back of the potting bench was a door that had come from the house. She had some brackets that she had bought for another project and never used. The bench and shelves were crafted from old lumber she had laying around. It took a week, more or less, for the construction and a coat of paint but, when she was done, she had a potting bench which had basically cost nothing.

She also had a chair that had been her grandfather's. The chair, Margaret said, was beyond repairing or restoring but was still unique. She cut a hole in the seat and installed an aluminum pot that her mother had boiled potatoes in as a planter (holes were drilled in the bottom). She now has a planter like no one else's. It will be filled with flowering plants and vines that drape over the sides.

There are many different ways of recycling for the garden or even inside. Be creative. Think out of the box. Box, you say... how about making a small table out of wine boxes as a place for sitting for your morning coffee. Antique shops often have the old-fashioned orange crates which work

well for storing garden or barbecue grill supplies. Check the thrift stores for boxes with attached lids. Secure the lid to where it is open and plant flowers. It would look good on that small table you just made out of the wine boxes.

Need a small, creative light for your patio. Take a glass block (can be used but may need to be cleaned up), a drill and drill bit for glass and a small string of Christmas lights. Drill the hole and thread the lights in, leaving the plug in out (of course). The block can be decorated with ribbon and silk flowers/plants or just tucked away in a corner for subtle light.

There are old iron bed frames that are no longer in use. They can be used as they are, maybe a little rusted with a color of paint showing through or painted a vibrant color to make a statement in the garden. Creeping plants and vines can be trained to climb up the frame which is now a trellis.

Or, take that bed frame and make a bench, using the frame as a back and attaching board to make a bench. Margaret took the entire bed, buried part of it and planted flowers in the bed - she now has a "flower bed."

Broken pots are now found in gardens, with part of it buried and a plant growing out of it. Old tree stumps that have rotted out make delightful planters. Either sit them upright and place a plant in it or turn them on the side, bury part of it and have flowers peeking out of it.

Do you have Grandpa's old bowling ball in the back of the closet and you don't want to throw it away but don't know what to do with it? Make garden art. Glue mosaic tiles or broken pieces of glass, then fill the spaces with grout. Sit it on a pedestal among the flowers in your garden.

The ideas are endless. Just look around and let your creative thoughts go to work.



Margaret Bucholtz points to one of her latest finds, an old watering can which placed on her potting bench made from recycled items.

Leaching Houseplants

By Dana Belsche

Everyone knows that someone stranded in the ocean should not drink the water. The salt content of that water will make a bad situation worse. What many people don't realize is that this same principle can harm plants. Fertilizers are salts. They must be salts in order for the plant roots to take them up. However, salt levels can build up over time and eventually may harm plant roots leading to scorched leaves and unhealthy plants. Though this can happen under field conditions, especially in low rainfall areas, it is particularly critical with houseplants. Houseplants have a certain soil volume that doesn't change until a plant is repotted. Salt build-up can be a crucial concern especially if plants are fertilized

heavily.

Leaching an overabundance of salts can be an important practice to insure the health of our houseplants. Leaching is not a complicated or difficult process. It consists of adding enough water to wash out excess salts. How much water is enough? Add the amount of water that would equal twice the volume of the pot. This, of course, would need to be done outside or in a bathtub or sink. Water must be added slowly so that it doesn't overflow the rim of the pot. If salt has formed a crust on the surface of the soil, remove it but don't take more than 1/4 inch of the underlying media. This may also be a good time to repot the plant.

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