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10 Free Gardening Products

By Linda Gray

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One of the pleasurable spin-offs in organic gardening is finding alternative ways of coming up with the same, if not better, end result.....

Household throwaways can be valuable to the alternate enthusiast. Here are ten recyclable ideas to make gardening a little less hard on the pocket!

1. Hedge clippings: Instead of burning or direct composting, beg, borrow or even buy, if the quantity justifies the price, an electric garden muncher.

Branches up to an inch in diameter are posted into a slot and the machine munches them up into small chips. Spread these chips thickly around shrubs or fruit trees to help keep moisture in, and control the temperature of the soil.

2. Food Waste: All food waste must be composted. Composting is becoming quite an art form, and special composting bins can be bought, or very simply made.

There are many different theories and each gardener will find his or her preferred way. Keeping the compost fairly warm is the overall key to a good result. Or, if you're in no hurry, simply keep adding to a heap, and dig out the bottom when required. Sieve before using and the compost will be ready for planting small plants and even seeds.

3. Old carpets, large damaged cardboard boxes; and similar materials can be laid over the vegetable plot in autumn to help prevent those early spring weeds appearing. Spread over a whole patch and weigh down with stones or logs. Lift off on a sunny day in early spring a few days before digging.

4. Paint trays: Keep old roller painting trays and similar containers for seed trays. Punch a few holes in the bottom for drainage. Add a little fine gravel before filling with seed compost. Seed trays shouldn't

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be deeper than 15cm.

5. Yoghurt pots: All plastic yoghurt or dessert pots can be washed and saved for re-potting seedlings. Make a hole in the bottom of each and add a little fine gravel before filling with compost or soil..

6. Glass jars: Glass jars with sealable lids are excellent for storing seeds, beans and peas for planting next year. (Safe from mice as well) After washing the jars, dry in the oven to remove all traces of moisture before storing your seeds. Collect dark glass jars, or wrap paper round clear jars to prevent seeds being damaged by light.

7. Ice Lolly sticks: Make perfect row markers in your seed trays or greenhouse beds. The wooden ones won't last for ever but you can at least write on them with pen, pencil or crayons!

8. Wire coat hangers: Make mini-cloches with discarded or broken wire coat hangers. Pull into a

square shape. Place the hook in the soil and push down gently until the natural bend in the wire rests on top of the soil. Place another a short distance away in your seed bed to create two ends of a cloche. Now throw over a sheet of plastic and hold down with logs or stones.

Note: this will work only when creating very small cloches.

9. Clear plastic: Keep any clear plastic containers that could be placed upside down over a plant. Cut a mineral water bottle in half to make two handy individual cloches. Large sheets of clear plastic from packaged household items are fine for throwing over mini coat hanger cloches.

10. Aluminium bottle tops: Keep aluminium tops from milk or juice bottles, and also coloured foil around beer or wine bottles. Thread together to make a bird scarer. Simply thread with thick cotton and hang on your fruit bushes before the birds find the new fruits.

Look out for other tools for the garden from kitchen throwaways such as: old kitchen spoons and forks for transplanting tiny plants in the greenhouse. Leaky buckets for harvesting small quantities of potatoes, carrots etc; light wooden boxes for harvesting salads through the summer, and transporting pots etc;

Keep an eye on that rubbish bag and turn today's throwaways into tomorrow's tools!

Linda Gray is a freelance writer and, with her partner, has spent ten years renovating an acre of neglected woodland. With a growing family to feed 'off the land', frugal gardening has become second nature! Drop in at

for pots of gardening inspiration!

What's in Store for National Home Gardening Club Members?

By Nicky Pilkington

The National Home Gardening Club offer many benefits to its members.

It is said to be the largest home gardening organization with paid membership. For a nominal fee, various benefits are available.

If you choose to become a member the National Home Gardening club, you will be entitled to the following perks.

1. Members can enter competitions to win free gardening products such as gardening accessories, tools, and other gardening supplies.
2. A coupon will be given to members to claim a free gardening shears.
3. Members can also access a free trial subscription of the Gardening How-To Magazine.
4. They may be eligible to test and keep gardening tools such as pruning shears. These are some of the products tested by members in the past two issues of the Gardening How-To magazine:
 - Honda Harmony Lawn Mower
 - Miracle-Gro Garden Weed Preventer
 - Sunflower Garden
 - Cobra Head Precision Weeder and Cultivator
 - Preen 'n Green
5. Members can enjoy a free directory of public gardens, which contains information about lush gardens, arboretums, and conservatories throughout the US.
6. They can interact and talk about tips, ideas and methods with other members.
7. Members can obtain gardening and landscaping tips and plans for the completion of various gardening projects.
8. They have access to the members-only gardening website.
9. Members can also preview gardening books, gardening videos, etc.

Indeed, the for-members-only benefits are that grandiose. They are all for the gardening enthusiasts to grab.

After the 30-day trial, you can continue your membership for only \$1 per month.

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Many garden-lovers think this is a small price to pay for all these privileges.

Find out more about gardening at

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