

# From Trash To Treasure

Using recycled items in garden displays is an economical way to create something unexpected for your customers.

By Meghan Boyer



Colorful stepladders are a fun, unexpected means of elevating potted plants in a garden.



**Top:** Even large pieces of "junk," like this retro stove, can be combined with plants to create interesting displays. **Bottom:** A bed of flowers complements an old, metal bed frame.

Broken plates, scratched CDs and tattered screen doors are items usually destined for the junkyard. Yet some inventive individuals use these and other typically discarded products in displays to create unique recycled garden décor. Economic and always original, such displays are a new approach to recycling and a delight for customers to see. And you may be surprised at the benefits they can bring. A few old or unusual items, some plants and creativity are all you'll need to get started.

## The Benefits

Consumers can't find recycled garden décor at every garden center in America, which means stores that have it stand out. It also makes for a unique shopping experience and shows consumers how much creativity can go into gardening, perhaps the best benefit of all.

The displays offer something for everyone: They present unique and creative ideas for some customers to use in their own gardens and stand out as conversation pieces for others. Either way, consumers take notice. Originality is key. While other stores are arranging the same sorts of statues and bird-baths, those with recycled displays have a limitless supply of options. And plants are easily showcased among the unexpected items.

Garden centers with recycled displays can become destinations for consumers. First, they'll come to shop for their regular items, and then they'll keep coming back to get ideas for their own gardens (and hopefully more plants, as well). Frequently switching your displays can keep the excitement elevated and create further incentive for customers to make numerous shopping trips to see the latest creations.

Maintaining multiple displays throughout the garden center and switching them out frequently is economically feasible because recycled décor doesn't cost a lot to create. And recycled garden décor means you are actually recycling, which is another positive fact. Environmentally conscious customers will appreciate that run-of-the-mill garbage has been turned into something beautiful. You may also feel good knowing that the local landfill is a little bit smaller.

Customers won't be the only ones enjoying the unusual displays; employees enjoy them, too. Getting all garden center employees involved with recycled displays can be a fun and productive team-building experience. Create teams for a friendly competition of who can find the best recycled items and assemble the most interesting display; one person can have an idea, and others can build upon it. Everyone will be working together to meld the old and new into something customers will appreciate.

## Where To "Shop"

Items for recycled displays are easy to find. And, depending on where you look, they can be very inexpensive or even free. Thrift shops and goodwill stores are good places to look for a variety of low-price display accessories. Such stores stock everything from kitchenware and old toys to furniture. The items have price tags, but some people may choose to look at the prices as nominal fees for clean, organized merchandise that's available in a retail atmosphere.

Ball Horticultural Company, West Chicago, Ill., working with Pride's Corner





### Planter chandelier

The Planter Chandelier can be used for outdoor dining, garden rooms or home décor; it is constructed of iron. Seasonal plants or floral can be added to the planter. Garden Market of Larkspur. (800) 783-7318. **Write in 1410**



### Glass torch

Handblown glass mini torches have 36-inch brass trimming and a stake. A fiberglass wick is included. The torch uses standard lamp oil. Bird Brain. (800) 289-4748. **Write in 1426**

## Try It Yourself

Here are a few ideas to get you started with your own recycled garden displays:

- Use scratched CDs and mirrors as reflective garden surfaces. Smash them up for a mosaic look or hang some together for a shiny mobile.
- Stick broken and chipped plates in the dirt around a garden for an interesting border.
- Drill hardware into old, interesting wood posts to hang planters.
- Use old gates, screen doors and large, empty frames as display backdrops.
- Drape a bare-spokes umbrella in dramatic fabric, and hang it in a display.
- Stack a few pieces of tile or chunks of granite or marble on the ground at varying heights, and place potted plants on top.

### Seed pack clip

Seed Pack Clips are a reusable alternative to buying preprinted herb and vegetable markers. Two wire designs made of steel and glass beads with an antique copper finish are available. Rome Industries, Inc. (800) 818-7603. **Write in 1422**



### Fruit sculpture

Peary Winkle is an original design by sculptor George Carruth. The sculpture can be placed indoors or out. The cast stone design comes with a lifetime guarantee. Carruth Studio, Inc. (800) 225-1178. **Write in 1404**

Farms, Lebanon, Conn., and Virginia Growers, Montpelier, Va., displayed interesting recycled garden art at the Eastern Performance Trials this past September. Sue Amatangelo, national retail account manager for Ball, recommends stopping by garage sales for inexpensive finds. She explained, "Many of the items we used in our displays — old buckets, clothing, bedframes, etc. — may not typically be found in the garden, but they're things that most people either have already or can purchase inexpensively. Believe it or not, many of the really unique items we used came from garage sales."

Those looking for free items (and feeling adventurous) can find them in junk piles or trash bins. Please be aware that taking someone's trash or going through a dumpster is illegal in some places; check local ordinances before heading out. Of course, asking family, friends and coworkers to bring in their unwanted "junk" is probably the easiest, most inexpensive way of all.

## Creating Displays

Once you've amassed a variety of items, what do you do with them? Marianne Binetti, gardening author and speaker, offers a simple recipe for garden centers that want to start implementing recycled displays: Start with three items (any more might be overwhelming). Use one piece, like an old screen door, as a backdrop. Then add an item that can be used as a container, like a bushel basket. Fill it with crushed cans or plastic pots, and arrange plants on top. The crushed cans or pots elevate the plants, creating the illusion that they are planted. This is beneficial because you avoid actually planting plants in soil and can sell directly from the display; it also makes it easy to frequently switch the display's contents.

For the third item, add one object that is purely interesting: an old tool, a bowling ball, doorknobs, cracked china or even a kitchen sink. Arrange everything in one area, and you have a complete recycled garden display.

Keeping an open mind as you look at each item will help when creating each display. The inspiration for recycled garden displays usually comes from the recycled pieces themselves. Binetti asks herself "What can I do with it?" whenever she sees an interesting item. This leads to everything from doorknobs to pieces of granite kitchen countertops making it into her displays. There's no right or wrong when creating: As long as the items are arranged creatively and attractively, you can put almost anything — from rusty tricycles to antiques — in them. When creating recycled garden displays, you're only limited by what you can find. 🌿

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### Wall plaque

The Gate Wall Plaque is made of wrought iron and hand-painted in an antique finish. It measures 43 inches tall and 25½ inches wide and can be displayed indoors or out. A variety of styles is available. Jacaman Gift Co., Inc. (800) 275-3316. **Write in 1413**

### Sun catcher

These sun catchers are handmade of stained art glass and plated with copper. They can be used indoors or out. The rooster and hen are each approximately 18 inches long. Georgetown Home & Garden. (206) 768-1901. **Write in 1411** ▶



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