

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE - THE GARDENING EDITION

| Laura Clarke



The age-old saying, “waste not, want not”, carries more weight than ever before. With many nations and companies pledging to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill each year, recycling rates are improving (87% in Australia, 58% in New Zealand). While this is important on a governmental level, we all have individual responsibility to contribute.

From cardboard underlays to paper pots, here are six ways you can contribute by incorporating your recycling into your gardening.

Paper Coffee Cups

If you happen to pick up a coffee in a paper cup, instead of throwing it in the recycling bin, why not use it as a plant pot! Remove the lid and make sure to clean out the inside properly before adding compost and planting any seeds of your choice (you can even use egg trays for seed planting). They can be an ideal benchtop display in your kitchen for growing your own herbs.

TIP: Cut your newspaper into circles so it fits the bottom of your flowerpot. Layer three pieces on top of each other before filling with soil and planting. This will provide a protective, breathable barrier that slows moisture from leaving your pots.

Use Shredded Paper In Your Compost

Paper is made from a natural, renewable material: wood fibre. This means that it can be used in your compost as it helps soil to retain moisture and the worms love it.

TIP: Avoid using waxy or laminated paper. Old receipts, statements and envelopes are safe for composting.



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Quirky Plant Pots

What do you do when your favourite mug gets chipped? Instead of throwing it away, why not hang onto it, fill it with soil and plant a flower so that it can continue to be used and enjoyed – chip or no chip the plant won't mind. This also works for any other kitchen containers that have passed their use-by date. Any old pots and pans that have lost their non-stick surfaces, missing handles or are misshapen, are a good substitute for traditional plastic pots. Even old oil drums make great space-saving potato planters.

TIP: Turn old gumboots into novelty planters by nailing a colourful row of them to a fence or piece of scrap wood and filling them with flowers. Just make sure to put some holes in the bottom of them for water drainage.

Lining Your Beds With Cardboard

Cardboard and catalogues are environmentally friendly and very accessible resources. Why not use it to line your planters and flower beds? This will not only degrade over time and add nutrients to the soil, but it acts as a preventative for weed and grass growth from beneath the bed.

TIP: Make sure you extend the cardboard slightly wider than the raised bed to ensure weeds and grass don't begin to creep up the sides.

Furniture

Before you take your old bed frame or table and chairs to the dump, think about whether you could give it a second lease of life outdoors. Why not try using an old desk as a potting table or a bench in your greenhouse? Got an old dresser kicking about? You could recycle them in your shed or greenhouse to help you keep things organised. Alternatively, upturning a bookcase and filling it with compost is a great substitute for a raised bed or planter.

TIP: Coat all furniture in wood seal or outdoor paint to make sure it stands the test of time.

Wooden Leftovers

Even though these may not be typical items found in and around the home, taking a walk in your local parks or looking on marketplace websites and forums is a great place to start. If you can get hold of any wooden pallets, these can be good space-saving planters. From stripping them down to create garden furniture, to using the wood to create raised beds, they offer a range of planting opportunities.

TIP: Be careful of nails and splinters if you decide to strip apart wooden pallets.