

S4.11 Using recycled materials



A core value of organic growing is reducing waste and saving money by reusing materials. This approach can be applied to several areas, such as composting and even paving. This section focuses on reusing items from around school to create useful things for your garden. There are lots of imaginative ways that help schools develop their garden and food growing. See A47 for ideas about making scarecrows.

Why reuse materials?

The checklist below is a helpful reminder when buying new items and disposing of old. While some compromise is inevitable, more and more suppliers and schemes are being set up to help gardeners find and reuse environmentally friendly items.

<i>Environmental impact</i>	Reusing materials saves huge amounts of 'rubbish' going to potentially harmful landfill sites.
<i>Opportunity</i>	Lots of items can be repaired and used creatively for purposes never before imagined.
<i>Save money</i>	Gardening items can be very expensive for new school gardens. Reusing materials saves buying new, so funds can be used elsewhere, such as for seeds and fruit trees.
<i>Local sourcing</i>	Using locally sourced materials, not least those already at the school, substantially reduces environmental impact and cost of transporting materials long distances. This is similar to 'food miles', ie the distance food travels to get to your plate.
<i>School study</i>	Reusing materials links really well with many areas of the curriculum, such as design, citizenship, science, etc. Use these ideas to research the life cycle of common items and then go outside to create something for nothing.

Ideas from schools



Reclamation yards are great for finding useful and cheap items to adapt for your garden.



Using plastic bottles to protect plants against cold weather and slugs.



Damson Wood Infant School made a fabulous greenhouse from 2lt plastic bottles, albeit quite a few!



Pupils at Galleywood Infant School made scarecrows out of spare materials from home and garden.



Pupils at Lillington Primary School make plant pots from newspaper, supported upright in reused trays.



Pupils at Lancaster Girls Grammar School planted salads in tubs from school caterers.



Bed labels made in design technology classes.



Long lasting raised bed edges from recycled plastic.



Beautiful new bench from old materials, ready for weary gardeners.



Garden gate created from old branches from plants on site.



Raised bed from spare logs around the garden (never take from the wild).



A large and robust compost heap made from old scraps of wood.

Health & Safety	<p>Be careful when adapting items for reuse, ensuring adult supervision. Make sure final product/device is safe for intended purpose and any exposure to weather. Dispose of other items responsibly following local authority regulations. Consult the school's site manager if unsure. Don't use tyres for growing food (SG1.2).</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>See also Health and Safety Guidelines (Section SG1.2)</i></p>
Activities on DVD	<p>A19 Making a paper pot</p> <p>A25 Reduce, reuse, run-around game</p> <p>A43 Building a wildlife habitat</p> <p>A47 Making a scarecrow</p>
Further information	<p>Organic Gardening Guidelines (on DVD)</p> <p>Local authorities</p> <p>Freecycle www.uk.freecycle.org</p> <p>Recycle now www.recyclenow.com</p>