

## Homes & Real estate

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### Junk meets yard

The first rule is that there are no rules when it comes to recycled yard art.



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#### EcoConsumer

Imagination, frugality and fun are having a party in your garden. You're invited, and so is all your junk.

Northwest gardeners make use of salvaged materials. But lately it's become a passion for many of us.

And why not? Reusing stuff in the yard and garden enhances our enjoyment of outdoor surroundings, saves money and reduces climate change because we buy fewer new products. We also experience a burst of pride when we make something useful or arty from discarded items.

If you're ready to dive in to this trashy trend, the first rule is that there are no rules. But you can learn from the legions of

gardeners who have blazed a trail of salvaged materials in their own yards.

Pick a project and make it your own. Build raised beds, planters, pathways, borders, walls, trellises, fences or gates. Develop a system to store rainwater or move it around for watering. Create garden art.

You can start small. Make garden stakes from ski poles, for example, or from pieces of political signs.

For inspiration, just look outside. Walk around neighborhoods. Surf the Internet and the idea-rich social-media website Pinterest (search for "garden reuse"). Adapt ideas from books, such as "Handmade Garden Projects" by Seattle author Lorene Edwards Forkner.

Construct your dream project from the detritus of everyday life: bricks, boards, pots, bottles, bottle caps and lids, cans, scrap metal, old windows, doors, broken furniture, light fixtures, mirrors, glass blocks, broken glass, pallets, bicycle parts, old sports equipment, tires, plumbing fixtures, boat remnants, plastic scraps, packaging materials, broken tools, chains, rocks, sticks, stumps and shells. The list never ends.

### **Garden junker's guide**

It's not always as easy as it sounds to give junk a new, useful life. Consider these tips:

- **Stretch the clock.** Projects usually take twice as long as you think, especially the first time. Allow yourself ample time to procure materials and iron out the kinks.
- **Beat the bushes for materials.** As your mom may have said, it never hurts to ask. A stranger or business owner will often be delighted for you to take those bricks or pallets off their hands. Check online resources such as Freecycle or the "free" section of [Craigslist](#).
- **Mine the mother lode.** For the backyard builder, a used building-materials store is your best friend. In Seattle, Earthwise, the RE Store and the newly relocated Second Use all carry extensive, ever-changing inventories of materials that will enhance your garden projects.
- **Tool up.** Have a few basic, sturdy tools on hand such as needle-nosed pliers and a brick hammer and consider borrowing others. Take advantage of tool "lending libraries" such as the new Northeast Seattle Tool Library, which anyone over 18 can join.
- **Improvise.** You often won't be able to find the exact materials you want. Be prepared to go to Plan B, and right on down the alphabet if necessary. Sometimes the coolest projects emerge from desperation-fueled ingenuity.
- **Be magnanimous.** Ask your family or housemates for input and build something that will make them happy. After all, it's their yard, too. Consider joint projects with spouses or neighbors.
- **Expect the unexpected.** Maybe you'll put a photo on Facebook of your wild art project involving old toilets and bike tires, and it will "go viral" and inspire backyard artists all over the world.

Or you might share the humorous experience of a local resident who was inundated with wine bottles from well-meaning friends after she said she needed a few dozen for a yard project. ("Thank you, but you can stop drinking now!")

You might amaze your friends by building a long, ornate brick pathway spending exactly no money.

But you won't know until you get this party started, one piece of junk at a time.

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