

Awkward Thumbs



A Guide to help you
start your own home
garden



Upcycling & Rain Water Harvesting

Awkward Thumbs

Companion Booklet

In 2014, we created a programme, Awkward Thumbs, to assist the budding but not so green "thumbed" garden enthusiast.

We are sure, these tips will come in handy especially now as we strive to be more self-sufficient during this COVID-19 Pandemic.

Aisha Reid and Jamal Hall explore the use of everyday household items to "upcycle" their backyard garden and find out the best way to harvest water for crops.



Resource person: Albert Farnum of the Ministry of Agriculture.

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Upcycling is the changing waste materials or useless products into new materials or products of better quality or for better environmental value.

Just about anything can be used to upcycle – bottles, cans, cartons, appliances, tyres, suitcases, even clothes and shoes. If you no longer have a use for it, upcycling is a way to go!



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Upcycling



Upcycling is great for gardeners now starting out. A garden space can be upgraded without any extra costs, since most of the materials can be found around the house.

Upcycling also helps to beautify any garden area and reuses materials which would normally be sent to the landfill.



5 Upcycling

At right, this old gallon Mauby container has been upcycled as a hanging basket.

The container is cut in half and several small holes are made in its side and base. Wiring is placed in the openings at the top to hang the basket, while the holes at the base are necessary for water to escape.

These baskets can be used for smaller crops, such as herbs, for vines or decorative plants.



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Upcycling



Any upcycled item could be custom-made to suit the environment or décor of your garden.

In addition, paints or decorations may be used to give the garden that special look. Almost any household item could be utilised for planting crops.

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Holes should be inserted into the base to allow for drainage, if not, when it rains, plants or crops may become waterlogged and drown.

The roots of the plant must breathe.



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Upcycling is a great way to reuse items around your home, which otherwise would be discarded. So, before you throw away that old appliance or container, see how you can make it work in your garden.

Be creative and give your backyard a unique look and style



Water harvesting involves the trapping of rainwater for use in the garden. This water can also be used for livestock or for irrigation purposes.

Harvesting rainwater has several advantages, including access to water during times of drought, less dependence on pipe water, and in turn, a lowering of your water bill. Also, rainwater is free from many of the chemicals in pipe water.



Albert gives a demonstration on how you can construct your own water harvesting system. He suggests using a drum or any large container found around your house.

You can use one drum, or a series of drums to catch rainwater. This depends on the type of crops and the size of your garden.

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Water Harvesting

In this demonstration, Albert uses a 50 gallon drum to construct a rainwater harvester.

Using a drill, he first makes a hole 4 inches from the base of the drum so a tap could be inserted. The size of the drill bit will be dependent on the size of the tap, whether $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ inch.

The tap allows the user to easily access the captured rainwater.





Once the opening is made, the tap is inserted and then attached inside via a plastic nut. A pliers may be used to tighten the nut.

You can create an overflow system for excess water by drilling another hole about four inches from the top of the drum and a plastic pipe inserted into an adapter to channel excess water to another container (see page 12 & 13).

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Water Harvesting



14 Water Harvesting



You can use a series of connected drums or containers to store more rainwater for plants.

It's best to raise the drum to allow for a better flow of water.

Some farmers use pipes to lead the excess water directly to their crops. The length of the overflow pipe depends on where the drum is placed. Its direction can be adjusted by using elbows.



When finished, move the drum to another part of the garden, where it will be set up to catch rainwater.

As mentioned earlier, you can raise the drum by using concrete blocks, building a stand or constructing a bracket to attach onto a wall.

Raising the container makes it easier to water crops; you would be relying on gravity instead of a pump.

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Water Harvesting



You can add another pipe to the house's gutter system to channel rainwater into the drum.

If you wish to place a cover or mesh on the drum to keep out debris, then it will be necessary to drill or cut another hole in the lid.

Once the harvester is set up and secured, you are ready to go! Remember, we're changing awkward thumbs into GREEN thumbs.

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Acknowledgements



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