

# Frugal Container Garden



Pots and planters can be an expensive item if you're planning on venturing into [container gardening](#). Instead of heading to the garden store, or the warehouse stores, think creatively. When you realize that you can put a plant in almost anything that holds dirt

and has some sort of drainage system, the possibilities for inexpensive container gardening grow exponentially.

Start by deciding if you need the containers to be decorative as well as useful since this will influence where you start looking for ideas. If you are OK with a simple and utilitarian look, then start gathering up things like:



- Plastic Buckets – Any size will work. The only thing you need to do is to punch some holes in the bottom or sides (if that is easier). Black buckets will hold the heat more which is great for northern gardens, but might not be recommended for warmer climates.
- Old Tires – I love using these to put my rhubarb plants in. I keep stacking tires on them as the stalks get longer forcing them up to the light. Again, the black tends to hold heat and act like a greenhouse of sorts for my plants.
- Rolls of Wire Fencing – Simply make a tube, wire shut,

cut to the height you want and then fill with dirt & mulch. This is a wonderful way to grow potatoes and if you keep covering up the plant, your veggies will be above ground when it's time to harvest, eliminating the digging.



Now, if you're looking to add some interest to your garden or things that are a tad more decorative than an old tire, start by using your imagination. I've included some pictures of things I've used in my garden that aren't typical "planters," but work as such. My easy to implement rule is if I can get some dirt into it, it's a planter!

If you are not sure what might be planter possibilities you'd like to add to your garden, begin by walking around your property or digging around in the garage or shed. Look for old containers under your kitchen sink, even plastic dish pans would work. Broken pots can be tipped over in the dirt and used to "frame" a plant like it's spilling out. Cracked bird baths can be given a new job with some dirt and a layer of lush Baby Tears.

Another place that can bring container inspiration are local thrift shops and neighborhood garage sales. You can find countless treasures in these places and many of the items I've found when searching there have now found a home in my garden. Remember, if it holds dirt, it's a planter!



A tradition began in my garden when one of my kids moved out, leaving her old gardening shoes for me to dispose of. She mentioned, "You could always plant in them" and that's exactly what I did. Her shoes were such a hit, we then required kids that were leaving, to donate a pair of shoes to the gardens (since I have taken care of foster kids over the years, needless to say, there are lots of shoes scattered around the property).

My favorite has to be my dad's last pair of work boots which my mom brought to my gardens after dad died. They are planted with forget-me-nots and located at my front door.



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# Frugal Gardening

When it comes to your garden, you need more than just plants to keep it alive. You also need the tools to keep the garden healthy and vibrant. To take care of your garden you also need to keep your tools safe. To do that you should get a shed from [Capital Construction](#) to keep all of your tools safe from the weather. I could survive with the first five tools if I needed to be really frugal, but I expanded my list to include the last five that most people would find essential:

**Shovel:** You'll need a shovel and a regular round end shovel is the choice if you can only have one. There are other varieties, but a generic round end will work for most tasks: moving dirt, digging holes for new plants and dividing large plants to name just a few. There is a lot of dirt that needs to be moved when you have a garden making the shovel the number one tool on the list.

**Hoe:** Again, there are many different kinds of hoes to choose from and if you can only get one, opt for a basic model. While there are lots of the fancy kinds of hoes, anything with moving parts doesn't belong on a "have to have" list. My

favorite is a forked hoe. This seems to be the easiest to maneuver in and around existing plants in my opinion.

**Bucket:** You don't need anything fancy here, but you do need a bucket. A free plastic bucket will work fine for steeping compost "tea", mixing potting soil, soaking the roots of a free plant – the list of uses are almost as long as my favorite plant list!

**Hose:** You will need to get water to whatever you plant and that will determine the length or number of hoses you need. This is one area where it can be worthwhile to pay a bit more for a quality hose since I have found the cheaper ones I have had over the years just didn't pass muster. You want a hose that doesn't kink up and one that will "behave" when it's coiled up.

**Spade & Cultivator:** If you are planning on any container gardening, a hand held spade and a cultivator (or something similar) are a necessity. You could substitute these with kitchen type serving utensils like large serving spoons and a fork found at a thrift store if you're in a big pinch. You'll probably need to bend the handles to make them function as garden tools, but they will do the job.

Those are the essential tools you'll need. The next 5 you could probably get by with if it was absolutely necessary, but these are still well worth the investment if given a choice:

**Wheelbarrow:** A wheelbarrow comes in extremely handy to haul compost, trimmings, soil, etc. You could substitute a wheelbarrow with a tarp which might be cheaper to begin with, but it will wear out with repeated use. You could also use a free 5 gallon bucket if you are working in a small yard, patio or deck area.

**Watering Can:** This device is especially nice when mixing fertilizers and other such things so you can place the mixture exactly where you want it. Buckets work, but it's hard to

regulate how much you're pouring that way.

**Markers:** If you want to know what you have planted and where it is, you'll need to mark where you planted everything. There are many plant/row markers on the market, but the most frugal ones I've come across are plastic knives. A big box of these are fairly inexpensive, and if you're really frugal, collect them from the next potluck you attend. They can last a couple seasons at a minimum and much longer if you're careful. They come with a nice flat surface to write on, the rain won't hurt them and you're not out a ton of money if they get lost in the garden or accidentally they end up in the compost pile.

**Garden Stakes:** You can buy these at any garden center or you can be creative and come up with frugal alternatives. I have several sizes, small (18") to large (5'). They are convenient to mark rows or individual plants, stake up plants that require support or you can use several in a row to string twine between, creating a support for plants like sweet peas.

**A Tarp:** I know I mentioned this as a substitute for the wheelbarrow, but it has enough uses in a garden that I thought it deserved its own number. I'll use it if I'm digging a hole to plant a large bush or tree so that the dirt that comes out of the hole is not put on the lawn or on top of other plants in the garden. It's also a great way to move a large bush or tree once you get it dug up. Spreading a tarp out on a picnic table would make a great temporary planting area and it helps keep the mess contained.

Happy Gardening, no matter what size & scope your corner of the world is.

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# Vinegar Uses In Garden



VINEGAR USES  
*In Garden*

[WWW.FRUGALGARDENING.COM](http://WWW.FRUGALGARDENING.COM)

1. **Clay Pot Cleaning:** Vinegar will remove the white salt buildup on old clay pots. Simply soak the affected areas in full strength vinegar.

2. **Kill Grass:** Undiluted vinegar will kill grass between bricks and sidewalk cracks. Simply spray where needed.

3. **Kill Weeds:** Spraying full strength vinegar on weeds will kill them – be careful not to spray it on the surrounding grass as it will kill that too.



4. **Deter Ants:** Spray vinegar around doors, appliances, and along other areas where ants are known to gather and the vinegar will keep them away.

5. **Keep Cats Away:** Vinegar will help keep cats away from areas you don't want them. Sprinkle vinegar on any areas where you don't want the cat walking, sleeping, or scratching.

6. **Freshen Cut Flowers:** Vinegar will help fresh cut flowers last longer. Add 2 tablespoons of vinegar and 1 teaspoon sugar for each quart of water.

*Courtesy of Treva*



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# Shrubs From A Pile Of Sticks



From this pathetic little bunch of twigs, given a few years, I will have a couple of nice rows of hydrangeas. I grabbed the handful of trimmings out of the compost pile when helping my mom in her yard this spring.



The second photo shows the same bunch, this time prepared into ready to plant “cuttings”. I don’t profess to be an authority on this subject, but I sure have come up with a yard full of free plants using my method.

I start by looking at the branch I have rescued, and determining where the buds are forming, or where the leaves are located. I cut on the diagonal and try to make it so each “cutting” has one of the bud intersections for the root and one above ground for the beginning of my new plant.

If I’m working with a branch that has large leaves, I cut the 2 leaves that will be above ground in half, so the little start doesn’t have to work so hard on leaves, but it can concentrate on putting out some new roots.

In the past, I have gone to the trouble (& expense) of trying a rooting hormone to dip the ends in, but haven’t noticed any difference in my starts. Both end up with a nice plant; one for free and one using a fairly expensive product. No guesswork needed as to which method I prefer!



The last photo shows one of my new starts in the ground – they were there less than a week at the time of the picture. New leaves are beginning to unfurl which is a promise of a new

garden addition (you must remember that “free” gardening often requires patience as the reward does not come as quickly this way as with buying plants that are already mature).

I have used this technique on many woody, branch type shrubs and plants such as forsythia, laurel, etc. If the method is free, what have you got to lose?

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## Free From Landscape Firms

A phone book and your local newspaper can be great tools to get your garden going and growing this spring. No, you’re not going to shred them & use them for mulch (although, this is not a bad idea).

What you want to do is look up the landscape firms in your local area. Make an effort to contact as many as you can until you come up with at least one willing to “work” with you. And, no, you’re not going to pay them to work in your yard.

Landscape firms have a problem that you can help them solve. In their work, they have a lot of yard waste and plants to dispose of and they are usually forced to pay fees in order to get rid of these items. If given the choice, most would rather give the “waste” away for free than to pay fees to have it hauled away. This is where you come in.

All you do is contact the landscape firms and see if they have items that you need that they need to get rid of. What is their “waste” may be exactly what you are looking to use in your garden. By taking the time to find them and to introduce yourself (and your garden), you can come to their aide.

If you are looking for specific garden items, you can ask for

specifics. An easier way may be to just come right out and ask if they have anything they are paying to get rid of. Either way, you stand to gain “goodies” for your garden and they stand to save some dump fees. Most landscape firms have the following items after finishing a job:

- Mulch, especially if you live in an area where lawns are being mowed. Just think of all that fresh grass mulching away in your garden beds, or between the rows of your veggies. If you’ve got room for the company’s truck to come in and dump a large pile, and you don’t live on the other side of no where, this might be a win-win situation for you and the landscapers.
- Cuttings. Again, this depends on your area and time of year, but think of all the plants that are being cut back, pruned and trimmed back. With a little work and a couple years worth of patience, you will see new shrubs and trees for your effort.
- Plants. Most commercial accounts pay for their landscape company to switch out their plant displays regularly. Where better for the old plants to find a new home than your garden?

Be warned, you’ll more than likely receive a number of “no thanks,” “we already donate to someone else” or “that would be too much work.” Don’t be discouraged. You can explain how you are willing to come to them to pick through the old plants, grab the cuttings before they hit the dumpster or bring trash cans for them to fill with grass clippings. The easier you make it for them, the more likely that they will let you help yourself to their waste. If they still say no, thank them for their time and move onto the next company on your list.

I’ve had a landscape company agree to dump a truckload of their trimmings in my yard with no extra work for them. In this case they were happy to do so because then they didn’t even have any dump fees to pay. It meant that I did have the job of digging through pile to find the items worth saving and



then preparing the rest of the pile to be used as mulch, but it's almost like Christmas uncovering an armload of hydrangea trimmings (how many plants can I get from an armload?), the equivalent of flats of bedding plants or enough ground cover starts that I can share (and trade) with all my friends.

Grab your list and get your garden growing!

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## Save Money – Gardening

*The Earth Laughs in Flowers*  
– Ralph Waldo Emerson









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Gardening can be fun, enjoyable and downright expensive if you're not careful. This site is dedicated to bring you easy to implement gardening tips and techniques that can help you save money while keeping all your plants in tip-top shape.

Making your garden beautiful on a budget is not nearly as difficult as it may first appear. You don't need to have the fanciest plants or the shiniest garden tool to make your garden a sight to see. It does take a bit of organization and planning, but this will result in you having a garden full of vegetables that you can place on your table at a low cost.

From keeping your gardening tools in good condition to learning how to trade seeds to get a large variety of vegetables at virtually no cost, there are a lot of ideas within these pages to help you keep your gardening and plant care needs at a minimum.



If you have your own frugal gardening tips that you'd like to share with others, please [email us](#) so that we can add your suggestions to our growing list.

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## Garden For Free



Is it possible to have a lush flower garden, produce your own veggie patch or just add to the landscaping around your home all for free? Absolutely. One of the easiest ways to do this is to participate in your local chapter of Freecycle. This is a Yahoo list, available at [FreeCycle.org](http://FreeCycle.org). The organization began in 2003 and now boasts close to 3500 chapters, or communities, as they are called and over 2 million subscribers.

The goal of Freecycle is to limit adding to the landfills by

recycling usable items. Posts need to be free, legal and appropriate for all ages. Freecycle: a simple solution to get rid of your no longer needed items and a fantastic way to acquire things on your wish list...all for free (minus the gas to go pick the things up!)

Once you have joined the group, please read your communities rules & regs. For example, my local group limits the number of WANTED posts you may list per month, as well as all participants are asked to list at least as many OFFERS as WANTEDS.

As soon as you're comfortably at home on your local Freecycle list, start posting according to your groups guidelines. Begin small, as you will want to follow through on all posts you receive (in order to be a responsible list member). How about:

**WANTED:** Strawberry starts/ Lake Stevens

I'll be happy to take your extra plants off your hands, now that many of you will be thinning your strawberry patch. Please let me know if I can assist with the digging too, not afraid of hard work here! Thanks much for freecycling!

Try to time your posts to the gardening tasks currently happening in your area (check our lists here or online for monthly gardening "to do" lists, or your local papers' gardening column) Local gardeners usually hate to throw out good plants and would much rather share with others.

If you're really new to gardening and don't know what you want, you can post something general like:

**WANTED:** Outdoor plants/ Lake Stevens

I'm new to gardening. Have dirt, shovel and ready to work. Please let me know

if you have plants, bushes, trees to share. I would love any help you could give to get my garden growing!

Be sure to send thank you notes to anyone you get plants from and always offer to take any other excess they may have. Strike up a friendship, tell them your interests regarding plants, offer to help in their garden with larger type chores needing a couple people, ask for advice regarding the plants they did give you and any other gardening questions you may have. Connections like these are the first steps to getting your garden to grow.

So how much did we spend on this so far? A new strawberry patch – Cost: just the gas to go pick up the plants! The same is true with the New Gardener post. You could get your vehicle full of plants for no cost at all. Remember to be flexible, be thankful and grab that shovel and get to work!

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## Gardening 10 Commandments

Every gardener has some commandments that they hold dear and follow. These are my 10 commandments for frugal gardening, as well as for [beginning gardeners](#) who are just getting started:

1. **Thou shalt have fun:** If you aren't having fun while gardening, find another hobby
2. **Thou shalt save money, not spend money:** If you are planting a frugal garden, the bounty you receive should ultimately save you money over the amount you put into the garden
3. **Thou shalt not acquire needy plants:** Nothing makes it into my garden if it has specific needs or is just constantly needy



(I sat through a garden club lecture & demo once where the speaker included the word critical more than a half dozen times...nothing goes in my garden that has a word like "critical" attached to it!)

**4. Thou shalt not acquire fleeting plants:** Anything I plant needs to stick with me. In other words, it can't be a fleeting, flash in the garden bed sort of annual. No spot-of-color sort of event in my garden. Plants have to come back again and again; and on their own too!

**5. Thou shalt keep digging to a minimum:** The less digging the better. I'm all for raised beds, container gardening and getting anyone else to do any necessary digging!

**6. Thou shalt be willing to try new things:** I will try anything once. I know, this is a slight contradiction to Commandment #3, but it is my garden & I reserve the right to try anything once. I can always pass it along to someone else if it doesn't behave itself and it may turn out to be something that is perfect for my garden that I can use again and again.

**7. Thou shalt not acquire thirsty plants:** Besides my veggie garden area, I don't want anything in my garden that will expire if it doesn't get a daily drink of water. Things need to hold their own here as I don't have a drip or irrigation system and I just don't seem to be the kind of gardener that remembers to water everything at exactly the right time. Plants with good root systems will win out every time, over those that are more delicate.

**8. Thou shalt favor plants with multiple uses:** Plants that do two things, instead of just one, will win a spot in my garden every time. Shrubs that are green all year and flower sometime during the year are great, as are trees that show off early spring blossoms as well as provide shade during the summer. Plants that are interesting in my borders or cottage gardens

plus provide veggies for the table are favorites and any plant that has a fragrance is a sure addition.

**9. Thou shalt not hide your garden in the back corner:** The older I get, the closer my gardens get to the house. When I began gardening, most of my beds were in the back forty; nice because there was lots of room and they could be interesting...or not. No one but me usually saw them. With my move to this current property, my gardens are located right outside my front door. This was initially due to not having any other ground ready to plant plus the proximity to a water faucet.

I will never do the back forty kind of gardening again. This is just way too much fun. Everyone that comes to my house, from family to the UPS driver, has some sort of comment about the gardens. And, since people are always visiting; I'm so much more interested in working to keep the gardens up to snuff!

**10. Thou shalt disturb weeds often:** My last commandment has to be the advice I received from a great old gardener friend: Disturb the little, almost invisible weed seeds on a regular basis (read this as daily) and there will be no need to spend hours weeding. So true. The more time I spend just cultivating the dirt in between the plants & rows, the fewer weeds I ever see, the little weed sprouts just get too discouraged to grow.

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## Grow Plants From Cuttings

One of the best ways to save money when gardening is to not purchase plants for your garden in the first place. There are a number of ways that this can be accomplished. One of the best and easiest ways to do this is to make use of plant

cuttings.

Learn to grow plants from cuttings. There are a variety of ways to prepare cuttings depending on the plant so a little study is necessary. Timing is also of great importance to the success of getting the plant cutting to generate on its own. That being said, it's not difficult to accomplish once you know the correct procedure for your type of plant. Spending some time to study the best way to go about using cuttings from the plants you want will help ensure that you have a beautifully full garden.

The best part about cuttings is that there are a large variety of plants that can be grown from them. It also means that you can have a whole new plant for free just by snipping off a piece of an already grown plant. Some easy plants to start with include mint, red valerian, hydrangea, pincushion, geraniums and scented geraniums.

In addition, consider getting cuttings from the food that you buy from the grocery store to eat. Many times you can slice off a small piece of the food and grow an entirely new plant while still eating the majority of it for your meal.