Thrift Store Gardening: Finding Affordable Tools and Supplies

I am a huge fan of thrift stores. Mostly, I go for the clothes. I almost never buy clothing that isn't either secondhand or handmade. But thrift stores also have tons of other things. My partner is terrific about shopping thrift stores and estate sales for everything from vintage coffee makers to new used furniture. So, naturally, thrift store gardening ideas have come into my life. It's a great way to get anything you might need for the garden without spending a lot of money.

Thrift Store Gardening Tools Are

Often Durable

I’m admittedly not someone who uses a large number of tools. However, my father was a woodworker. My mother owned rental properties that she always fixed up herself. So, I know about tools, even if I don’t use them a whole lot myself. And what I know about most tools is that the ones made a really long time ago were made to last. Therefore, if you find older tools, they’re actually likely to last you longer than buying the same brand new tool today. Of course, that’s not always the case. And there are plenty of new gadgets and gizmos that have features you just aren’t going to get from a decades-old device. But, overall, thrift store gardening allows you to find tools that might just last you a lifetime.

Top Ten Garden Tools to Get At Thrift Stores

You can find a range of different items at thrift stores, of course. Here are ten to look for as a gardener:

1. **Hand Trowel:** Secondhand trowels, being durable and frequently available, offer an affordable and reliable option for various planting and weeding needs.
2. **Pruning Shears:** This is another example of a tool that was crafted with sturdier materials in the past. Secondhand pruning shears provide a more resilient tool for precision trimming at a fraction of the cost of a new pair.
3. **Shovel:** Thrift stores offer a great selection of shovels.
4. **Rake:** And, of course, rakes are usually easy to find at thrift stores as well.
5. **Garden Hoe:** Why pay for a fancy garden hoe when a simple secondhand one does just as well?
6. **Watering Can:** Thrift stores frequently have a variety of

watering cans, including unique vintage designs that add fun to the garden.

7. **Garden Fork:** If you can find a garden fork at a thrift store, get it!
8. **Garden Gloves:** Get a variety of different glove types at a low cost when you shop secondhand.
9. **Wheelbarrow:** Thrift stores often have secondhand wheelbarrows in good working condition, providing an affordable option for transporting heavy loads in your garden compared to buying a new one.
10. **Garden Sprayer:** These aren’t typically as easy to find in thrift stores but grab one if you see one.

Other Garden Items to Get at Thrift Stores

Beyond tools, thrift stores hold a myriad of unique and vintage garden decor items. The beauty lies in the discovery; you might stumble upon an item with a story, infusing your garden with personality and charm. Plus, repurposing items for the garden not only adds aesthetic value but also reduces waste by giving these pieces a second life. Examples to look for:

Pottery / Containers

Thrift stores offer an eclectic range of containers, from ceramic pots to quirky containers that can be upcycled as planters. You can uncover items like teapots, baskets, or even old drawers that can be transformed into unique plant-holding vessels. It’s a budget-friendly way to add flair and creativity to your gardening space while recycling and repurposing items that might otherwise go unused.

Garden Books and Resources

Thrift stores often carry a variety of gardening books, magazines, and resources at discounted prices. You might stumble upon vintage gardening manuals, plant encyclopedias, or DIY guides for garden projects. These resources can provide valuable insights, tips, and inspiration for both beginners and seasoned gardeners. Plus, flipping through the pages of a weathered book can add a nostalgic charm to your gardening journey.

Garden Furniture

Thrift stores often feature garden furniture pieces like chairs, tables, or benches. Look for sturdy, weather-resistant materials that can withstand outdoor conditions.

Outdoor Lighting

Thrift stores sometimes offer outdoor lighting options such as lanterns, string lights, or solar-powered fixtures. You might discover vintage lamps that can be repurposed or modern solar-powered lights that add a touch of enchantment to your garden pathways or seating areas.

Seasonal Decor and Planters

Seasonal planters or decorative elements can be easily switched out to keep your garden fresh and vibrant throughout the year. From Halloween scarecrows to Christmas-themed planters, these items can be excellent additions to celebrate different seasons or holidays in your garden.

Outdoor Games and Entertainment

Thrift stores sometimes carry outdoor games and entertainment items like croquet sets, badminton rackets, or old-fashioned board games designed for outdoor use. These items can provide

a fun and nostalgic element to your garden.

Plant Starters and Garden Supplies

Apart from tools and decor, thrift stores sometimes offer plant starters like pots with young seedlings or cuttings. You might chance upon unused bags of soil, organic fertilizers, or barely used gardening gloves—all at a fraction of their original cost.

My Favorite Places for Thrift Store Gardening in the SF Bay Area

My partner recently introduced me to Urban Ore. It's a huge warehouse thrift store in Berkeley that I can't believe I hadn't already known about. They have just about everything you might want – both for the home and for more industrial purposes. And they have a huge outdoor section. You know when you walk out the back of Home Depot into the garden section? It's like that, but better. If you only go thrift store gardening in one place in the San Francisco Bay Area, then this is the place that I recommend.

The other place I'd highly recommend is SCRAP SF. This is actually an artist thrift store. Mostly I go here for yarn and canvas. However, there are so many different materials here. While you might not find garden tools, per se, you can still find a lot of items to upcycle for the garden. Planters, garden decor, etc. are all enhanced by the materials here.

Read More:

- Upcycling in the Garden
- Are Old Tires Toxic to Plants?
- Don't Throw Those Pots Away!