

Birds & Blooms

extra

Beauty in Your Own Backyard

SWEET SINGERS

Attract wrens to your backyard this spring

House wren

get creative

WITH NEW IDEAS FOR CONTAINERS

OUR BIRDING EXPERTS

tackle some of your hardest questions

PLANT A GARDEN

to help native bees



10

EASY-TO-GROW VEGGIES GREAT FOR BEGINNERS

THE #1
BIRD & GARDEN
MAGAZINE
IN AMERICA

1 Long-Lost Hobby Equipment

When hobbies you'd taken up years ago lose their luster, use the goods for the garden.

Drum Set. Turn your drum set dreams into garden glory. Remove the drumhead, plant the drum shell partway into the ground, then add soil and plants.

Boat or canoe. If your vessel has sprung a leak, reuse it for flowers. Someday you'll catch that 50-inch musky, but for now, flowers are much easier than fish.

Instruments. Trumpets, guitars and banjos all have potential to hold flowers. Plus, they're almost guaranteed to be good conversation pieces.

Leftover paint. Aspiring artists typically have paint to spare. Use your skills to fancy up your existing raised beds. It doesn't have to be perfect; in fact, just a solid bright color will perk up your plantings.

2 Forlorn Furniture

Updating furniture in your home? Give your old stuff an extended life outside.

Bed frame. When painted a bright color, an old wooden bed frame looks fabulous propped outdoors and planted with lovely flowers, creating a literal raised bed.

Bookcase. A saggy-shelf bookcase easily transforms into a raised bed simply by removing the back (and shelves, if you wish), laying it on its side and filling it with soil, flowers or veggies. Worms and bookworms alike will love it.

Drawers. Dinged-up dresser drawers become small planting plots when the bottoms are removed and plants are grown inside.

File cabinets. Paint old file cabinet drawers a vibrant color to make small beds for flowers. It's way more exciting than housing tax documents.

3 Your Recycling Bin (or Your Neighbor's)

Check your discard bins and piles for items that can be reused in the garden.

Shutters. If your neighbors are updating their home's exterior, ask if you can have the old shutters. Shutters make great raised beds, because they're easy to customize to fit whatever garden size you want.

Wine bottles. If you needed an excuse to enjoy a glass of wine, here it is! But if you're not a wine connoisseur or drinker, ask around local pubs or wineries for empty bottles. Line up and arrange the bottles to form a garden bed, fill the inside with soil and plant away.



Raised Bed Freebies

Get materials for your raised beds for free! Here are some ideas to help you save.

- Check websites such as freecycle.org and craigslist.org often. These are great sources for free or cheap items around your area.
- Scour the imperfect bin at your local lumber or hardware store for wood at a reduced rate. Since it's going outside to be filled with soil, it doesn't need to be perfect.
- Check out local flea markets, garage sales or estate sales for big bargains.



4 Empty Nester Supplies

When kids grow out of their childhood things, repurpose them into useful items for growing plants.

Outgrown goods. If they outgrow their boots, plant flowers in them. Turn a used crib into a garden bed. Old changing table? An instant display for containers!

Kiddie pools. Those plastic pools are only useful when the kids are pint-sized. Add drainage holes and you've got yourself a fun (and portable) raised bed.

Swing set. Many parts of a wooden swing set can be repurposed in the garden. If a sandbox was attached, make a flower bed. The ropes and chains serve as supports for climbing plants. A tire swing transforms into a place to grow flowers.

5 Just Plain Quirky

Looking for something fun and unique? These ideas take your garden from ordinary to off-the-wall.

Interlocking blocks. The little kid inside you will love this Lego-like raised bed growing set. After a successful Kickstarter campaign, Togetherfarms sells these awesome raised bed kits on Amazon for around \$70. They are made from food-safe recycled plastic and are easily assembled like Legos—no tools necessary.

Watering troughs. Though normally meant for farm duty, these galvanized multipurpose bins look sleek planted with bright flowers or vegetables. You can find them at a farm merchandise store or by asking a generous farmer who's getting rid of one. ■



Crystal Rennie is a freelance writer in Wisconsin. She has a lot of worn out kid stuff that she is excited to try in the garden this year.