

16 The Grove, Totley
Sheffield S17 4AS

Quirky meets allotment recycling

This garden has an emphasis on recycling and water harvesting. Many of the containers around the garden have come out of skips or scrapyards and are now pressed into use as junk sculpture or to grow vegetables in or for use as water containers or the comfrey liquid factory. In an age of consumerism it is worth considering how to counter the wasteful society we live in. I hope my garden gives some recycling ideas for use in your garden.



Skips are a great source of materials for gardeners: I use old bakers' trays as frames for peas and cucumbers or protection from pigeons for young plants, builders' barrels, rubbish bins, old butts and oil containers from curry houses to grow veg in, and old double-glazing units to warm the soil and keep rain off seedlings. Old CDs are good bird scarers, and an old rotary dryer doubles as a bird scarer and frame for climbing beans. An old satellite dish makes a great bird feeder allowing water to drain through.

This is a completely
organic garden

What's Quirky?

- Caterpillar topiary Ionicera hedge
- Grass seat chair
- Combine harvest auger supporting cardoon
- "No Drought Here" watering can sculpture
- Pizza factory tray sculpture
- 2 textile mill rollers
- Hanging basket of tools
- Juvenile ostrich topiary
- Cutlery and cake tray mobile
- Watering can fountain
- 2 printer plates from 1935 pages of *The Star*
- Rotary dryer bean support
- Sweet peas in chair seat
- GWR station bench
- Tea strainer mobile
- Stone man with grass hair

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The lawnmower: John Beazer

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I give talks on composting to gardening and allotment groups and open the garden in the summer to groups by appointment. Contact me if you're interested.

Water harvesting

Since the house is on a water meter and we are in area of plentiful rainfall, I collect rain from every surface I can. There are 16 butts, 2 tanks, 2 baths and assorted holders.

- Water butt at the front takes brown water from the upstairs shower and basin.
- Water butt by lounge takes water from house roof.
- 2 large tanks take water from the house roof and gravity feed it via a long pipe to the vegetable garden.
- A water butt on the balcony takes water from the roof.
- 4 sheds between them fill 7 water butts.
- Both greenhouses each have three butts.
- Two butts gravity feed water into tanks inside each greenhouse for easy watering.
- Two old baths fill from upturned plastic garden table tops, one of which overflows into a barrel base.

Total approx. capacity of water saved in all butts and baths = 2,900 litres



Large butt taking water off one greenhouse roof. When full this butt fills the small butt beside it. A hose from the large butt also gravity fills a tank inside the greenhouse.

IDEAS

- Connecting several water butts together increases the amount of water it is possible to save from one roof.
- A tank inside a greenhouse makes watering in summer much easier & quicker as you scoop water in one go rather than waiting for the can to fill under a tap.
- Tanks and baths need to be covered both to keep out debris, and to prevent midges and mosquitoes breeding.
- Old plastic garden table tops make excellent covers as, upside down, they also collect more water!

Composting and fertilisers

Composting is the re-cycling of all biodegradable materials in order to increase bacterial action in the soil.

I believe that a garden without at least one compost heap, and preferably several, is a garden without a heart. Compost is the engine that makes the whole machine work.

I have 11 compost containers, including some plastic dalek types (mostly from skips) a home-made double chamber Zealand box, and a sectional bin. The latter two (below) and for hanging baskets.

I compost most materials and I usually allow between 12 & 18 months to get a good friable compost.

I aerate with a metal pole and only turn towards the end of the process.

As well as compost, I collect Autumn leaves to make leaf-mould, which I use to make my own potting compost.

I grow comfrey & cut 3x a yr, & compress to make a strong liquid which is a high nitrogen feed perfect for ripening tomatoes and for hanging baskets.

My soil's fertility has been greatly enhanced by the use of Seer Rock Dust, which increases moisture-holding properties in the soil, and improves the soil structure and drainage. Rockdust also provides calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus and potassium, plus trace elements and micro-nutrients, which are often leached out of the soil by rain.

And after I harvest the early crops I grow green manures such as mustard, field beans & phacelia, to improve the soil too.

TIP: Next time you go to a coffee shop ask for a bag (or 3!) of their used coffee grounds. Use it as slug deterrent round young plants, or mix into the compost heap. And you don't even have to have a coffee—they're usually glad to get rid of grounds. Fertility for free!



Sectional bin



New Zealand bins, with removable slats.