



Reduce Reuse Recycle Watering Tips



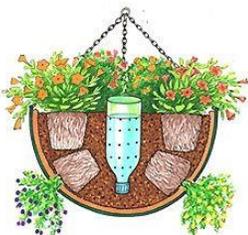
Use one quart bottles as self-watering pots for seedlings. Cut the bottle in half. Drill three small drainage holes in the cap plus one larger hole to pass a piece of cotton string through. Thread a six inch piece of cotton string through and knot it above the inside of the lid. Invert the top half into the bottom half. Fill with soil mix and plant seedlings. Water so that the bottom has about one inch of water in it at all times. The string will wick water up through the soil to keep the plants watered. This is a good project for spring. One quart size bottles fit easily on most windowsills.

Use one or two quart bottles to help water vegetable plants deeply and get water soluble food to the root zone. Use a carpenter's awl to punch about two dozen holes in the bottle. When you plant your veggies, bury the bottle alongside your plants. When it is time to water fill the bottle to the top. You can add water soluble fertilizers to the water you use to make sure they get to the roots and don't sit on top of the soil and evaporate. In hot weather you may need to fill the bottle several times to saturate the root zone.



You can also bury bottles next to shrubs or trees you plant to help keep the root zone moist during the first few critical seasons and to apply fertilizers. If the bottles seem too flimsy (and they can) use perforated drain pipe instead cut to about 18 inches long. Roots will grow around the bottle or pipe just fine.

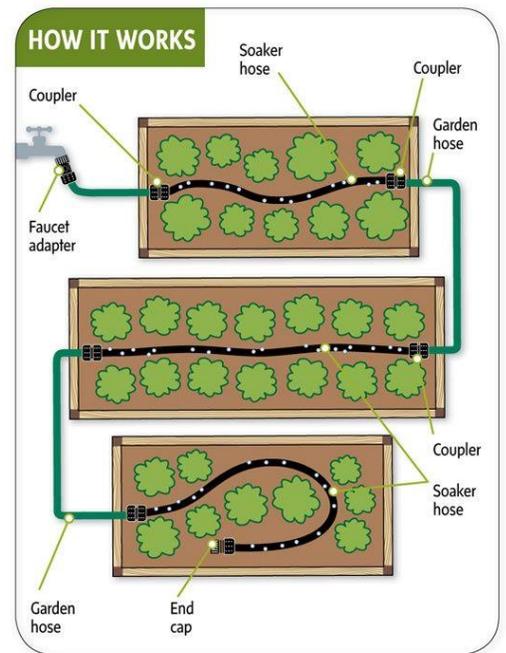
Smaller water sized bottles can be used in a similar way in hanging baskets. Leave the lid on but cut the bottom off. Again punch a couple dozen holes in the bottle. Bury the bottle as shown with the open bottom above your soil. Fill the bottle with water and you will be sure the whole basket gets moisture all the way to the bottom with less mess and spillage. You can also add water soluble fertilizers to the water to feed hungry annual flowers to keep them flowering all summer.





If you have a flower or garden bed that is an odd shape, you can use a quart bottle to make a custom sprinkler pattern that helps prevent wasting water. Use duct tape to attach a bottle to a short length of garden hose. Turn the hose on and use a carpenter's awl to punch holes in the bottle to aim water where it is needed. Punching just a few holes in the bottom will make a soaker that you can use for very small areas.

Use soaker hose and small pieces of old hose to make a custom watering system for raised beds. Hose end repair parts are used to make each end male or female as needed. An end cap finishes it off. Use landscape staples to hold the soaker hose in place. With this system there is almost no piece of scrap hose that is too short!



If you are building raised beds why not add a subterranean water system while you are at it? Lay perforated drain pipe in the bottom of the beds. Make sure one end is pushed tightly against the side of the bed or add an end cap. Drill a hole large enough to put a fill pipe made of 1 ½ inch pvc pipe in one end as shown. When it is time to water, fill the tube. Water will leach out of the drain pipe and water the root zone of your plants. This method also allows you to cover the surface of your raised beds with black plastic if you want to keep the soil warmer for crops that like heat.



You can build your own self watering planter box with a plastic tote and a few recycled items. Cut the center out of the plastic tote lid as shown. Drill about two dozen holes in it. In the bottom of the tote, put plastic pots from the nursery to help hold the perforated lid up. In this picture, a one gallon plastic jar is cut in half and also used. You need your false bottom to be about 4 inches off the true bottom of the tote. Add a piece of pvc pipe that is long enough to go all the way to the bottom as shown. Drill one larger hole in the side of the tote just at the level of the false bottom. This will allow excess water to drain out and a little bit of air to get in.

This kind of container garden works great if you travel during the season. You can water before you leave and count on your homemade box to keep your plants watered for 4-5 days depending on the weather.

You can make a similar system for single plants with two five gallon buckets. This works great for tomatoes or peppers. Cut the bottom out of a five gallon bucket so that a water plant basket fits in it. Drill larger holes for a piece of pvc pipe as shown. Drill a larger hole about six inches up in the side of the bottom bucket for drainage. Insert the bucket and pipe, add your soil and plants. Again, this type of system will allow you to leave your plants for a few days.

