



Ken Hovet plants his entire vegetable garden in plastic 5-gal. buckets. Buckets set over rain gutter troughs reinforced on both sides with two-by-fours.

Easy To Manage “Bucket Garden”

By Nancy Leasman

Ken Hovet of rural Browerville, Minn., plants his entire vegetable garden in plastic 5-gal. buckets. It's a simple idea, but an easy way to grow tomatoes, potatoes, peas, beans and other vegetables.

He cuts a 3-in. dia. hole in the bottom of each bucket, inserts a plastic net filter cup into the hole (available at aquarium stores), and then fills the bucket with soil. The net cups set inside rain gutter troughs that are reinforced on both sides with two-by-fours. Each piece of rain gutter rests on cement blocks covered by carpet and holds nine 5-gal. buckets or 11 smaller ones.

The troughs, arranged in rows, are connected with black hoses to a 250-gal. water tank. Float valves automatically gravity-feed water into the troughs whenever the water level gets low.

Hovet advises using black hoses since white ones seem to encourage algae growth and also get brittle and deteriorate in the sun. Algae can plug hoses, but he hasn't had a problem since he switched to the black ones. He also covers the outside of the water tank with black plastic to keep out algae. Algae in the troughs, though, isn't a problem.

This “beneath the bucket” irrigation system allows the soil to soak up water without having the bottom of the bucket standing in water. Hovet says it works really well except during extremely dry spells, when the top of the soil might dry out a little more. There's only a little evaporation from the troughs, and no water is wasted as can happen with overhead sprinklers.

Hovet says it costs about \$66 for the material and equipment for each trough set up if you buy new.

The entire system is reusable year after year. Hovet says, “We're into our fifth



Plastic net filter cup is inserted into hole cut into bottom of each bucket, to draw water out of rain gutters.

summer using this system but we haven't had to replace anything yet. So on an annual cost, we're spending about \$13. You can't get anyone to pull weeds for \$13. Also, the system is scale-able so it can be enlarged easily over time.”

About the only garden crops that Hovet doesn't grow in buckets are corn, squash and melons. Corn takes up a lot of space. Vines growing from the top of the buckets and then draping over the rims tend to get crimped and don't do well.

At the end of the growing season Hovet dumps the contents of all the buckets onto a tarp, then folds the tarp over to cover the pile. In the spring he shovels the soil into a cement mixer, along with a little fertilizer and water. “I fluff it up good,” he says, “and then fill the buckets up again.”

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Raised garden beds are made out of treated lumber and 55-gal. plastic barrels. “We like not having to bend over to plant or pick vegetables,” says inventor Terry Benoit.

“Half-Barrel” Raised Garden Beds

“I wanted to show your readers the raised garden beds my wife Debbie and I recently made out of some treated lumber and 55-gal. plastic barrels,” says Terry Benoit, Orange, Texas.

“We've used raised garden beds for years to grow watermelons, squash, tomatoes, peppers, egg plants, corn and strawberries. But this year, we came up with a new approach using treated lumber and 55-gal. plastic barrels. I used three of the barrels to build six raised garden beds. They're high enough that we don't have to bend over to plant or pick vegetables.

“I cut the barrels in half, drilled 1/2-in.

holes in the bottom spaced 3 in. apart for drainage, and added topsoil. Then I used treated wood to make a 4-legged structure for each half barrel. The barrels are recessed about 4 in. inside the upper part of the structure to make the growing area a little deeper. The vertical support legs are made from 2 by 4-in. treated wood.

“This is our first year using our new raised garden beds. We're growing watermelons and squash in them and so far, so good.”

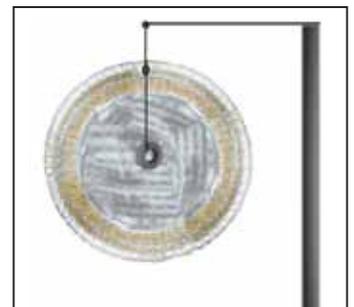
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“Pie Plate” Bird Scarer

“I keep birds and animals out of my garden with a simple noise maker that I made out of an aluminum pie plate and a string with a nut tied to it,” says Douglas Brown, Whitney, Ontario.

Brown punched a hole in the edge of the plate, then hung the plate on an 8-in. long stiff wire that extends horizontally from a post. He tied a string with a 1/4-in. nut on the end to the same hole. The nut hangs down at about the center of the plate.

“As the plate flaps around in the wind, the nut constantly bounces against it and makes an echoing noise that's quite loud,” says Brown. “I've even tried hanging the plate from the limb of an apple tree to keep deer away, and the deer won't come near it. The only problem is that if there's a breeze it'll make a lot of noise all night long, which your neighbors might not appreciate.”



Nut hanging freely from string bangs against aluminum pie plate as plate flaps around in the wind.

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Deer Gates Stopped Fence Damage

Eloise Twining saved herself a lot of fence fixing in the last 25 years with a simple idea - leaving narrow openings. She calls the dozen openings in her woven wire fence “deer gates”.

With 1,500 acres of rough California country that changes 1,000 ft. in elevation, Twining said she found herself fixing the same places in the fence every six months. Narrow blacktail deer trails led up to the broken spots. Occasionally a deer jumped badly, got a foot caught in the top wires and died leaving a dried out leg dangling in the fence.

“I figured if the deer are going to keep tearing the fence apart, I might as well let them go through,” she explains.

She put wood or steel fence posts about 9 or 10 in. apart and cut all but the top and bottom strands of the woven fence. The cut wires were wrapped around the posts on

each side of the 2 1/2-ft. tall opening.

The width and height could be adjusted where deer are larger, she notes, but this solution has worked well for her cattle and horse pasture fences for decades, reducing maintenance in problem spots by 90 percent.

“This wouldn't work for very young calves or small animals like sheep, but on a fence for bigger livestock and on a fence that's being regularly beat up by deer it works great,” Twining says. The simple solution has saved her plenty of work and headaches while keeping in cattle and the horses she boards.

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