

Small Projects for Your Garden

I love a small, achievable project, something that creates beauty or is practical and useful in the garden. Even better if it is something the whole family can enjoy doing. Here are a few that we are going to try.

Turn a wooden pallet into a vertical garden

This is a great idea for small spaces, creating interest, hiding an eyesore, dry areas, as a divider, or bringing a garden closer to the house or barbecue.

Find a pallet - hardwood if possible as it will last longer. Work on it at the spot you want it to remain, because it will be heavy to move once planted up. Lay it flat on the ground with the side with the smaller gaps facing down. Tack or staple weed mat or shade cloth over the surface facing up and over all the open edges. Secure the cloth or mat to the cross bars as well.

Turn the pallet over. Leave it flat on the ground. Decide which way up it will go when it is upright. Fill well with good quality potting mix with some compost mixed in. Water gently and thoroughly. Cover with wads of straw, tucking it in behind the wood – this serves as mulch and also helps to keep the soil in.

Decide if you will plant in every horizontal gap or in every second one. With the pallet still flat on the ground, create holes in the mulch and plant small plants that do not need too much root space. Choose plants that will suit the aspect and amount of sun or shade your pallet garden will receive. An edible garden might have oregano, thyme and calendulas in the top, lots of strawberries in the middle rows and basil and parsley at the bottom. A floral wall might have pigface along the top then African daisies with cotton lavender for foliage contrast for all the rows. Succulents all over can look beautiful and will be a low water option. Water the plants in. Leave the pallet on the ground for a few weeks so the plants can start growing.



Carefully lift the pallet up into position and ensure it is secure. Pull back the weedmat/shade cloth from the top edge and fold it behind the pallet or cut it off. You will mostly water the garden along this top edge, with the moisture trickling down through the potting mix to the bottom. Decide on your watering method before you mulch and plant the top row with toughies that can cope with the most exposed position. Watering options include a dripper hose, 'planting' bottles or containers with holes in their sides and bottoms along the row so that you can put in quite a bit of water which will slowly drip out, or gentle hand watering.

Edible/Decorative Cubby House

If you are making a structure for beans, cucumbers or other vegies to climb on, consider shaping it so that it becomes a temporary cubby house. The simple tee-pee will work if it has a wide enough base. Initially you can plant short term crops in the interior, such as lettuces, spinach and radishes; something that can be harvested by the time your climbers have really got going. It will become a shady spot for children to play in while you work in the garden.

Butterfly Puddler

Butterflies cannot drink from open water. They suck up moisture from damp soil and sand. Select a sheltered spot which will not be windy but can be sunny. Use a shallow dish or unused bird bath about 45 cm wide and nearly fill it with a layer of sand. Include some twigs for landing on and a few flat stones for the butterflies to sun themselves on. Add water so that the sand is slightly moist, not dripping. Attract butterflies to your puddler by putting out some cut overripe fruit or orange slices. Plant plants with masses of open flowers that are easy for butterflies to spot and get nectar from. Research what plants are on the menu for the different species of butterflies in your area.

Happy Gardening,

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