



# Garlic Spray for Hostas

Slugs and snails LOVE hostas, turning your prized plants into decorative doilies!

I learnt this tip from a gold-medal-award-winning-hosta-grower at RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

1. In a saucepan add 2 litres of water (1 litre of water per bulb of garlic)
2. Add 2 full bulbs of garlic
3. Bring to a boil
4. Crush the bulbs against the side of the saucepan with the back of a fork to release the juices
5. Remove any floating skins
6. After a few minutes the water will turn cloudy – this is the concentrate for the garlic spray
7. Take 2 tablespoons of the concentrate and add to a 4.5 litre watering can
8. When the weather is colder and wetter and the slugs are more active, the mix can be made stronger
9. Drench the plants, leaves and stems
10. Repeat every week
11. If more damage occurs repeat twice a week



# Propagating Cuttings in Water

Many herbaceous perennials and houseplants can be propagated by rooting a cutting in water.

1. On the plant look for a leaf node, and using a sharp pair of scissors or secateurs cut just below the node
2. Remove any leaves that will be below the water level
3. Place the cutting into a clean glass
4. Add water
5. Change the water every 3-5 days with fresh room-temperature water
6. In no time at all, 3-4 weeks, roots will form
7. Placing the cutting and glass where there is plenty of light (but not in direct sunlight) encourages roots to grow faster
8. Do not mist your cutting
9. When the roots have formed and the plant is looking healthy, pot on into peat-free, multi-purpose compost



# Homemade Hormone-rooting Compound

Honey is a natural rooting hormone. It is anti-bacterial and has anti-fungal properties, both of which are essential for propagating healthy plants.

Honey protects the cuttings from pathogens and allows the natural rooting hormones in the cutting to stimulate root growth.

1. Pour some honey into a container
2. On the plant look for a leaf node, and using a sharp pair of scissors or secateurs cut just below the node
3. Remove the lower leaves and dip the end of the cutting into the honey
4. Make a small hole around the edge of a terracotta pot and insert the cutting with the honey attached
5. Cuttings with honey on can also be grown in water (add immediately after the honey has been applied) and rockwool (ensure the rockwool is saturated before adding the cutting)



# Growing Sweet Peas in a Cereal Box

The success to growing sweet peas depends on what is going on below the soil surface. Sweet peas have a long tap root, which need to go deep. Therefore, when sowing sweet peas ensure you give them the best start by sowing them in a container where the roots can grow deep.

1. Cut a cereal box in half
2. Ensure the sealed end of the cereal box is at the bottom when laid upright on a table
3. Add peat-free, multi-purpose compost to a depth of 10cm, minimum
4. Whether sowing your sweet peas in the autumn or spring the same tips apply
5. Take some moist kitchen towel and place the seeds on top
6. Place inside a recycled, clean sandwich bag and place it somewhere warm
7. The seeds will swell and maybe start to sprout
8. At this point, add the sweet pea seeds to the compost in the cereal box
9. Sow two seeds per hole to guarantee growth (the smallest seeding can be removed to allow the larger one to grow on)
10. Cover with compost and water
11. Once the seedlings are c. 10-15cm in height, plant out the whole thing (box included)
12. Roots will make their way through the cardboard box, which, in time, will decompose



# Homemade Black Spot and Powdery Mildew Solution

With just 3 ingredients you can make a solution to treat black spot and powdery mildew.

1. Mix milk with water at a 1:1 ratio
2. Add 2 tablespoons of cinnamon
3. Mix well and then pour into a spray bottle (recycled spray bottles from kitchen cleaners can be used as long as the bottle and the spray and tube are flushed with warm water several times to remove any traces of the kitchen cleaner)
4. Soak the leaves of your infected plant once a week with this homemade black spot and powdery mildew solution
5. Remember to pick up any infected leaves that have fallen to the ground and destroy them
6. To reduce the chances of re-infection the following year, prune the plant back hard
7. At the first sign of black spot or powdery mildew soak the leaves with this solution



# Banana Water as Plant Fertiliser

Banana peels contain potassium, calcium, magnesium, sodium, sulphur and manganese – nutrients essential for plant growth. In fact, they contain up to 25% phosphorous (for good plant root development and up to 42% potassium (for good plant health, more flowers and better and tastier fruit and veg).

To help your plants thrive, both houseplants and outdoor plants, make a simple solution from banana peels.

Just remember though that the sugar in bananas (especially when the peels are fermented in water) may attract flies to your houseplants.

1. Enjoy a banana!
2. Cut up the peel into small pieces or leave them whole
3. Take a container and add the pieces of banana peel
4. Fill the container with as many banana peels as possible
5. Cover with warm water, ensuring the water covers the peel
6. Leave somewhere dark and warm for 2 or 3 days, stirring occasionally
7. Strain the liquid from the peel
8. Take 5 parts water to 1 part banana-water fertiliser and water your plants



# Coffee Grounds to Repel Pests

Coffee grounds are potent. They make a perfect pest repellent for indoor- and outdoor-plants.

All types of coffee can be used, whether you like light roast or dark roast.

The coffee scent will help repel:

- ants;
- snails and slugs;
- bees;
- fleas; and
- thrips.

In addition, coffee grounds are rich in nitrogen, perfect for developing strong and healthy stems and leaves. Potassium and phosphorous can also be found in coffee grounds.

And, coffee grounds attract worms, which are vital to a healthy garden.

Do not use coffee grounds on young seedlings and seeds that are germinating. The caffeine has allelopathic properties which can stunt plant growth.

Use moderately, applying as a thin layer to the soil's surface.



# Making Your Own Pots

Recycling toilet roll inners and newspaper to make your own pots is fun, cheap and effective.

There is no need to remove the plant and compost from the homemade pots as the cardboard and newspaper will rot down when planted in soil, and roots will make their way through the material in search of water, sugar, minerals and carbohydrates.

## Newspaper/paper

1. You will need a jam jar (or pot stamp) to roll a length of newspaper around
2. Ensure the paper overhangs the jam jar so you can fold it over itself to form the base
3. Take off the homemade pot and dip into water
4. As the water dries it 'sticks' the paper together
5. Fill with peat-free, multi-purpose compost and insert a seed or young plant to grow on

## Toilet roll cardboard inner

1. With a pair of scissors cut slits around one end of the cardboard roll
2. Fold over the slits to form the base
3. Dip into water so the bottom 'stick's together
6. Fill with peat-free, multi-purpose compost and insert a seed or young plant to grow on





# Homemade Root-development Compound

Coconut water contains gibberellic acid which helps boost seed germination and speeds up root development.

Coconut water is an excellent source of magnesium, calcium and other beneficial minerals that give an added boost to a plant's growth. It is therefore a natural fertiliser.

Coconut water also contains different plant growth regulators such as indole-3-acetic acid, the natural and primary auxin (hormone) in plants, which are found in shoot tips that are transferred to root tips to promote cell division and elongation, stem and root growth, as well as cytokinin, abscisic acid and salicylic acid.

Soak cuttings in coconut water for 4-6 hours to help faster rooting and increase the chances of growth.

Dilute 0.3 litres of coconut water to 4.5 litres of water, shake well and use every 2-4 weeks.



# Homemade Bird Box from a Gravel Board

You will need:

A 2400mm long gravel board, 150mm wide x 22mm thick

A length of inner tube

Screws

Felt nails

1. Cut the gravel board into pieces:
  - a. 1 x 550-610mm for the back
  - b. 2 x 450mm for the sides
  - c. 1 x 400mm for the front with a pre-cut entrance for the birds
  - d. 1 x 106mm for the base
2. Assemble the back, sides and front sections and mark and cut out the slope of the roof
3. Cut or plane the roof piece at an angle so it fits the back
4. Screw all pieces together
5. Nail on, using the inner tube, the roof to the back to create a flap (for ease of cleaning)



# Banana Skins to Rejuvenate Plant Leaves

In a few minutes you can clean away dust and grime from your plant leaves using a banana skin.

Simply rub the inside of the peel on the top surface of your leaves.

Bananas contain potassium which helps move nutrients and water between plant cells. It is especially helpful for plants that fruit and flower.

Use on:

Tomato and pepper plants

Roses

Musa, Monstera, Alocasia, Ficus, Crassula, Strelitzia



# Looking After Plants Over Winter

Before the cold weather comes along it is a good idea to get together everything that you will need in advance.

1. Wrap pots and containers in bubble wrap or horticultural fleece to insulate them
2. Alternatively, fill carrier bags with shredded paper or rolled up newspaper and fix to the outside of pots and containers with string, like an insulated padded coat
3. Apply a 7-10cm mulch with a biodegradable material, such as coir or bark chippings, to the soil surface of plants in borders and in pots and containers
4. Move pots up close to the wall of the house – the wall will act like a radiator during the night, giving off heat when the temperature drops
5. Stop feeding plants come the winter. Even winter-flowering plants will not need fertiliser
6. To stop plants sweating and possibly rotting, remove protective covers when very mild weather is forecast for a prolonged period of time. Remember to replace when weather turns cold again
7. Move tender plants to a cold frame or cool greenhouse, or indoors in a bright position
8. Lift pots and containers using pot feet to improve drainage and reduce the risk of waterlogged compost which will freeze



# Natural Bug Spray

Making your own natural bug spray is fun and cheap and you can use it on your plants, both indoors and out, on edibles and ornamentals.

You will need:

- 4 bulbs of garlic and a large onion
- 2 teaspoons of cayenne or chili
- Water and washing-up liquid

The sulphur component in garlic and onions keeps bugs at a distance by producing an odour that bugs hate.

1. Chop the 4 bulbs of garlic and onion
2. Whizz for a minute or two in a kitchen blender with 0.5 litres of water and add 2 teaspoons of either cayenne or chili
3. Steep overnight
4. Use 1 part of the concentrate to 1 litre of water
5. Add a tablespoon of washing-up liquid to help the concentrate cling to the plants
6. Apply weekly



# Growing Fruit and Veg from Leftovers

Look in the bottom of your fridge for a tomato, a cos lettuce, spring onions and even a strawberry.

Cut a slice of the tomato and the strawberry (the inside for the tomato and the red outside of the strawberry).

Fill a margarine tub with peat-free, multi-purpose compost. Add the slice and cover with a thin layer of compost. Water and watch the seeds germinate. A recycled plastic bottle can be used as a cloche to increase the temperature and humidity and aid growth.

For the cos lettuce, remove the leaves and enjoy in a salad or sandwich. In a pot or margarine tub, fill with peat-free, multi-purpose compost and push the flat end (plate) of the lettuce into the soil. Water and watch as new leaves emerge, which you can harvest and enjoy.

With the spring onions, remove the green shoots and add to soups, salads and sandwiches. Take the white end with the roots and insert into a tub of peat-free, multi-purpose compost. New green shoots will emerge, which you can harvest.



# Pea Shoots from Peas

You will need:

Marrowfat peas

Water to soak the peas in

A cereal box

Peat-free, multi-purpose compost

1. Soak marrowfat peas overnight in water
2. Cut along an empty cereal box, 10-15 cm from the bottom
3. Leave the bottom attached and fill the empty cereal boxes with peat-free, multi-purpose compost
4. Insert 2 peas down to your 1st knuckle (giving you a good chance of a successful crop)
5. Place somewhere bright
6. In a couple of weeks, you can start harvesting your pea shoots
7. Cut off only 50% of the pea shoots at any one time
8. You should be able to continue picking pea shoots for a few months
9. Peas left to grow on into mature pea plants with peapods will need to be planted into soil or a large container



# Bean Sprouts in a Plastic Bottle

You will need:

Mung beans

Recycled glass jar or plastic bottle

1. Rinse and pick over beans
2. Mung beans are one of the easiest and fastest to sprout
3. Place beans in jar/bottle – they should not take up more than a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the jar/bottle
4. Fill the glass jar with cool, clean water
5. Leave to soak for 8-12 hours (or overnight) at room temperature – cover with a drainable lid – cheesecloth secured with a rubber band works well
6. Rinse and drain – place upside down, at an angle so water and any remaining moisture is released through the lid
7. Repeat item 6 with fresh water at least twice a day
8. Finally, drain through a colander before refrigerating
9. Eat and enjoy!

Tasty mung-bean sprouts can be added to a dish in the final 2 minutes of cooking.





# Make Your Own Bird Cakes

(As per RSPB advice) You will need:

Good quality bird seed

Raisins

Peanuts

Grated cheese

Suet or lard

Yoghurt pots and string

1. Make a small hole in the bottom of a yoghurt pot. Thread string through the hole and tie a knot on the inside
2. Allow the lard to warm up to room temperature, but don't melt it. Then cut it up into small pieces and put it in the mixing bowl
3. Add the other ingredients to the bowl and mix them together with your fingertips. Keep adding the seed/raisin/cheese mixture and squidding it until the fat holds it all together
4. Fill your yoghurt pots with the bird cake mixture and put them in the fridge to set for an hour or so
5. Hang your bird cakes from trees or your bird table



# Plastic Bottles as Mini Cloches

Cloches can be used to extend the length of your growing season and make more of your space, because they create a small microclimate around the plant or plants that are covered.

The covered area affords the plant or plants some level of protection, either from the cold, or from certain pests.

Depending on the materials used and the exact design of the cloche in question, they can create a microclimate a couple of degrees, or even more, warmer than the surroundings.

Cloches are commonly used to allow growers to sow and plant earlier in the spring, and keep plants going longer into the autumn months.

Recycling clear bottles and jars and using them as mini cloches is cheap and rewarding.

Use these mini cloches to protect young seedlings or use above soil of newly sown seeds.

These mini cloches are more portable, more useful for smaller spaces – and can offer more flexibility for gardeners.



# Compost Scoop from a Recycled Plastic Milk Carton

Compost scoops vary in price from a couple of pounds to over 20 pounds.

It is easy, however, to make your own from an everyday plastic milk carton.

Remove the label and ensure you wash out the plastic carton.

With a sharp pair of scissors start cutting a few centimetres away from the handle.

The handle from the plastic milk carton will become the handle of the compost scoop.

You will notice that the plastic around the handle is thicker than the rest of the carton. This is ideal for forming the scoop.

Continue to cut the plastic to form the shape of the scoop.

Use and re-use to add compost to pots and containers and to get compost out of compost bags.



# Plant Labels from a Recycled Plastic Milk Carton

Plant labels can be plastic, wood, chalkboard, stone, in fact anything that you can write on.

Making your own from a recycled plastic milk carton saves pennies if not pounds, and is a great weekend job for the whole family.

Labelling your plants is essential. If you do not label, further into the year you may forget what you planted and where.

Taking a pair of sharp scissors and the remainder of the plastic milk carton (which you used to create your compost scoop), cut out rectangles c. 15cm in length and 3cm wide. (Make them whatever size suits you.)

Cut a point at one end of every label. This end will go into the compost.

Use a permanent marker, pencil or pen to write the name of the plant and when it was sown or planted.



# Homemade Drip Irrigation Device

You will need:

A plastic bottle

A cotton bud

An elastic band/string/cable tie

Bamboo cane

Water

1. Make a hole in the lid of the plastic bottle, large enough for the cotton bud
2. Insert the cotton bud into the hole (you might need some Sellotape to secure the cotton bud, if the hole is too large), half way it's length, so one end is inside the bottle and the other is outside
3. Place a bamboo cane against the side of the bottle, overhanging the lid end, and secure in place with an elastic band, string or a cable tie
4. Fill the bottle with water and screw on the lid with the cotton bud attached
5. Upturn the whole thing and push the overhanging bamboo cane into the soil
6. The water will drip through the cotton bud onto the surface of the soil

The drip irrigation device is ideal for houseplants, seedlings, outside pots and containers.



# Homemade Self-watering Container

You will need:

- A plastic bottle
- A piece of sock or cheesecloth
- An elastic band
- Peat-free, multi-purpose compost
- Young plant/seed(s)
- Scissors

1. Cut a plastic bottle in half
2. Fill the bottom half with water
3. Remove the lid
4. Secure a piece of old sock or cheesecloth over the mouth of the bottle with an elastic band to prevent soil from dropping out, when it is upturned
5. Upturn the bottle end with the cheesecloth/sock into the bottom end of the bottle
6. Fill the upturned end with peat free, multi-purpose compost and a seed or young plant
7. Keep the water in the bottom half topped up, as it soaks into the compost by capillary action