

REUSE, RECYCLE, REPURPOSE

Transform discarded furniture and yard-sale finds into new, useful treasures

By CLAIRE YEZBAK FADDEN

I'm always on the lookout for new ways to use old things. I love finding a second life for still-serviceable items.

And I'm not alone. Women are conscious of how much we put in the trash bins each week. We want to think green and minimize waste. So it's a victory when we find ways to reuse, recycle, and repurpose.

Thinking green also offers financial benefits. When you restructure an old dresser or find a new use for wine corks, you save on something you might have bought. Here are some of my favorite projects that breathe new life into items I would have thrown out, donated, or offered for pennies at our cul-de-sac's annual yard sale.

And the best part: You don't have to be a design maven to pull off any of these re-dos.

The Great Outdoors

Patio Privacy Partition – Sitting at our patio table treated us to a panoramic view of our trash bins. I didn't like that, but I also didn't want to spend hundreds of dollars purchasing an outdoor patio screen. I tried blocking off the area with plants,



but you could still see the trash bins.

Luckily, I noticed my neighbor leaving a large bookshelf wall out on trash day. She gave it to me and, after a few coats of outdoor house paint, it became the perfect divider to hide unsightly garbage cans. I attached plastic lattice to entice my morning glories to climb, and it provides hidden storage for gardening equipment and other items.



Summer Entertaining – “As summer comes and entertaining moves outdoors, you don't have to go out and buy all-new tableware, centerpiece, or serving containers,” says Emmy-winning host, lifestyle expert, and bestselling author Christopher Lowell. “You might already have what you need in the laundry room, garage, or basement.”

Lowell suggests using galvanized tin buckets collecting dust in the garage or down in the basement to create a great backyard barbecue buffet.

“Clean them out and then invert one on top of the other, varying their heights for interest. Line with brightly colored dishtowels or greens and fill with easy, premade takeout like fried chicken, pasta salads, coleslaw, etc. in their containers. When the event is over, everything goes back in utility storage,” he says.

“Those glass containers you have filled with food on the kitchen counter can be recycled for summer too,” adds Lowell. “Empty them and refill with seashells and sand; then arrange them in a cluster. They'll give that instant

beach feel to any room or surface they're placed.”

For more ideas from Christopher Lowell's *The Hassle-Free Host*, visit www.christopherlowell.com.

Chair Planter – You can easily turn an old wooden, lawn, or wicker chair into a beautiful display for climbing ivy, vines, and seasonal flowers. Simply remove the seating and replace it with chicken wire, dried moss, and some burlap to contain the soil.

An even easier option is to cut a hole into the seat and insert a pot. If you don't want to go to that much work, you can place an existing planter on the seat and achieve the same effect. Pinterest, the online bulletin-board site, offers more than 70 variations of chair planters. Visit <http://pinterest.com/shysue/chair-planters> for more ideas and photos.

Easy Indoor Ideas

Wine Cork Bulletin Board – If you're not a wine drinker, invite your friends and family who are to contribute their extra corks for this



handy, practical project.

Decide what size bulletin board you want. (Collect about forty corks for a 10-inch by 14-inch board.) In whatever pattern you choose, glue corks to a piece of core board, cardboard, plywood, or even a discarded photo frame. Attach to the wall with nails and start pinning.

Or, another great use for wine corks is to make your own trivets that can be used for hot dishes or as moisture absorbers under plants. Of course, you can only use real-cork wine corks, as the newer plastic wine corks will melt if using as a hot pad. Great way to display the wines you love!

Cord Control – Are your cell-phone cords getting the better of you? Grab some wine corks, a mini-pipe clamp, and an extra-large serving fork, and combine them to produce an attractive electronic cord organizer.

In his crafty book *Upcycling: Create Beautiful Things with the Stuff You Already Have*, Danny Seo shares way to take recycling to a new level with unique and eco-friendly ideas like this one. The book is filled with 100 of Seo's favorite upcycling projects for decorating, entertaining, and giving.

There are fun and easy-to-do ideas for kids and ideas to incorporate leaves, shells, and other elements from the great outdoors, too.

Home Decorating

Vintage Meets Modern – Sometimes the perfect item ripe for repurposing isn't hanging around the house. You have to find it. That's what interior designer Adrienne Faulkner did with three sets of Asian doors she spotted in a warehouse.

Faulkner, CEO of the interior and architectural design firm Faulkner Design Group, refashioned the vintage doors into a modern presentation to create a unique entrance to her master bathroom.

To restore the old doors, Faulkner needed 11 hand-sandings, four coatings of stain, and then a final coat of varnish for the doors.

“To refurbish older items and bring




out their intrinsic beauty, you must invest a considerable amount of time, patience, and elbow grease,” said Faulkner. “I worked on the project on the weekends, and altogether it took about two months to complete the finished look.”

To differentiate the doors leading into her baby’s room, Faulkner applied plaid fabric with trim on the window.

Room to Play – Convert an old coffee table to a play center for the kids. Purchase a chalk board, a dry-erase board, or larger sheets of Lego building plates and secure them to the top of an old coffee table. Chalkboard paint works too and comes in any color. Paint the surface, including the legs, for an all-over approved drawing site.

Convert an old card table for the same purpose. When it’s not in use, it can be easily stored away or relocated outside for summer fun.

Wine Station – Always wanted a freestanding wine rack, but never had the time or money to find the perfect one? You can use an old bookcase (one that’s as deep as the length of a wine bottle) to create your own.

Remove the first shelf and attach under-cabinet wine glass tracks to the underside of the top. Position the next shelf so you have room to insert a stand-alone bottle rack to store your wine. The bottom shelf can be used for other liquor or to add a small wicker basket to corral your wine opener, an aerator, wine charms, stoppers, or any other small items. 

Claire Yezbak Fadden has important reminders and favorite photos pinned to her handy wine-cork bulletin board. Follow her on Twitter @claireflaire.



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