

# TRASH TO TREASURE – IDEAS FOR REUSE



RECYCLE MONTANA

You have already reduced and you're not ready to recycle so we have compiled a list of ideas to help you REUSE common items.

**Aluminum Foil** – Make sure it is clean and sanitary, flatten, fold if necessary and it will be ready to use later.

**Baby Wipe Containers** - Use to store and organize your arts and crafts supplies, sewing thread, needles, office supplies, pencils, pens, keys, etc.

**Bags - Paper Grocery Bags** – Keep available so you can quickly grab every time someone in the house is going to the grocery store. They can be used again and again. They also make great tote bags or can be used to store items in your closet.

**Bags - Plastic Baggies** – Wash them out and reuse later. Where possible, use a plastic re-sealable container.

**Bags - Plastic Grocery Bags**- Use as garbage cans liners in your home or business, they make great travel bags for your car, lunch bags, use to discard your scoopable cat litter clumps, take with you when you walk your dog to scoop your dog's poop and when you have too many, find a local store who will accept for recycling.

**Binders - 3-Ring** - Use to organize bank and credit card statements or your favorite recipes. You can also donate to a local thrift store or the school district.

**Blackboard Chalk** – Use to repair holes in plaster walls, simply drive the chalk into the hole and cut off flush with the wall. Leftover chalk can be put with metal to help shine when rubbed.

**Blankets** - Place in the trunk of your car for emergencies, good for ground cover at picnics, concerts or your next trip to the beach. Fine soft blankets can be bound for baby blankets.

**Bottle Caps** – Use to repair dents in wooden tables or to fix your plunger with the rubber piece that keeps trying to fall off.

**Bottle for Rolling Pin** – Use a long, slender bottle with a gently sloping neck.

**Bottles - Glass Beverage** - Use old wine or beer bottles as a candle holder. The wax dripping down the sides will create an artistic effect. Bottles can also be used as a vase for your favorite flowers.

**Bottles - Plastic Beverage** - Wash out and fill with water to store for emergencies. Fill the smaller bottles with water and freeze to use in coolers or lunch boxes to keep items cool.

**Bottles - Plastic Food**- Old ketchup, mustard, etc. bottles can be used to store your own homemade sauces and condiments

**Bottles - Plastic Beauty Products (Shampoo, Lotion, etc.)** - Refill with product and use for travel or to keep handy at your desk, in your car and in your purse.

**Boxes – Cereal** - Remove the top and part of three sides of the larger ones to use as magazine holders. You can decorate them with gift wrap or paint them. Cut a hole in the side (toward the bottom). Mount the box with thumbtacks to the inside of a kitchen cabinet with the hole facing outward. Stuff old grocery bags in through the top of the box and pull them out through the hole when needed.

**Boxes/Shoe** - Use to store mementos like cards, children's artwork. Keep to use for your kids' school projects. Use them to store small toys, recipes, odds and ends, art and sewing supplies, etc.

**Buttons** – Two attractive buttons make a pair of earrings, four you can be made into a pair of cufflinks.

**Calendar Pictures** – Paste the calendar pictures on old wastebaskets.

**Can Keys** – Provide a good way to manage your toothpaste, winding from the bottom of the tube.

**Compact Discs** - Decorate with paper, ribbon, paint, etc. to make Christmas tree ornaments or door hangers or use as coasters.

**Corks** – Use for scouring kitchen utensils or it makes a handy pin holder.

**Egg Cartons** - Use to sprout seedlings before transplanting in the spring. Break up the Styrofoam and use a packing material. Use to store golf balls, jewelry or other household items.

**Envelopes** - Take envelopes which are sent by businesses, place a label over the pre-printed address, write in a new address, and send it on its way. Use for writing notes to family members. Use for storing receipts, storing or carrying coupons and as scrap paper.

**Eyeglasses** - Take out the lenses and use for Halloween costumes. Have your optometrist make them into sunglasses. Save the screws in case you lose them from your current glasses. Save old ones and use them when doing messy work. Donate to an organization which takes old eyeglasses and puts new lenses in for people who cannot afford to buy new pairs.

**Eyeglass Cases** - Use as a pocket protector or for storing a few special pens on a desktop, beside the bed, etc. Use as a protective case for your cellular phone.

**Fabric Softener Sheets** - Use as stuffing for stuffed animals and decorative pillows. Reuse in your sock or underwear drawer to keep your clothes smelling fresh. Tear the sheets in half before using in the dryer to reduce the number of sheets you use. Wrap around a few clothes hangers in the closet to keep your clothes smelling fresh. Use to dust your house or place inside shoes at night to keep them smelling fresh.

**Felt Hats** – You can make into pot or iron holders and needle cases. You can also cut to replace the inner soles of your favorite shoes.

**Film Canisters** - Storage of thumbtacks, rubber bands, paper clips, nuts, bolts, seeds, buttons, etc. Put in your child's backpack for emergency phone calls. Use for mixing small portions of paint. Fill with aspirin and keep in your backpack or purse. Put a few loose buttons or beads inside and use as a cat toy.

**Flower Pots - Small/Medium** - Fill partially with sand and use as an outdoor ash tray. Use when placing flowers at a cemetery. Use small, plastic pots as scoops for pet food or potting soil. Use for making sand castles or snow forts. Use small pots as fruit-picking baskets. Keep a small pot by the dryer to collect lint. Use a medium size pot for storage of fruits

and vegetables on the counter top. Use a small pot as a candy jar. Paint different colors and use to decorate around a garden.

**Flower Pots – Large** - Use for storage of rags in the basement. Use pots for collecting leaves, weeds, etc. while working in the yard. Take lined pots with you when going fruit picking. Instead of taking the small baskets provided home with you, dump the fruit into the flower pot and return the fruit baskets to the farm owner. Use pots for storage of apples, oranges, potatoes, etc. in the house. Use pots for storage of gardening tools. Use pots for storage of toys.

**Foil Trays** - Wash and use for baking. Use for feeding your pets or fill with holiday cookies and give as gifts.

**Garden Hose** - Poke holes throughout the length of the hose and make it into a soaker hose or a sprinkler for your kids. Cut into smaller sections and attach to the thin, metal handles on buckets to make it more comfortable to carry. Cut a small section off, clean it, and use it as a sturdy key chain. Use to tie up a young tree for support.

**Greeting Cards** - Use as bookmarks or make into an ornament. Make into gift tags by cutting an old card with pinking shears, punching a hole in the corner, and tying the pieces together. Add the name and a note inside. Cut off the side with the picture (if there is no writing on the reverse side) and reuse as a post card. Use in your scrapbooks as decorative embellishments.

**Ice-Cream Sticks** – Make good markers for rows of garden seeds or plants.

**Jars - Small (Baby Food, Bouillon)** - Use for storage of nuts, bolts, etc. Make them into musical instruments for your children by placing a few dried beans, pasta, rice, coins, etc. inside the jar after removing the label. Keep on desk for storing paper clips, rubber bands, etc. Use for starting plants indoors. Insert a wick and fill with wax to make your own candle. Decorate the outside to match the decor of the room. Use for storing excess seeds. Decorate the lid and jar with fabric paints, lace, sequins, etc. Fill with candy, bath salts, a candle, etc. and give as gifts.

**Jars – Food** - Use for storing extra spaghetti sauce which comes from a can. Use larger jars for storing homemade soups. Drink from smaller glass jars. Use peanut butter or mayonnaise jars to store homemade cookies in the freezer. They will be protected from breakage and easily visible. Store your razor in a small, covered jar immersed in alcohol to prevent oxidization of the blade. It will stay sharp longer. Use spaghetti jars to can tomatoes and other vegetables. The standard canning lids and rings fit perfectly.

**Juice Cans** - Use as a pen and pencil holder. Use for potting plants indoors. Use as a scoop for pet food. Cut to make it shorter and use as a scoop for sugar, flour, pasta, etc.

**Laundry Baskets** - Use as a recycling basket for curbside pickup. Use when picking apples, pears, etc. Use for gathering leaves in the fall. Line with a blanket and use as a pet's bed. Use to store children's toys in a closet. Keep in the trunk of your car to keep groceries together. Use for storing old rags or rugs. Use when pulling weeds.

**Lint** – Can be used for stuffing toys or as a fire starter.

**Lunchboxes** - Use for general storage, sewing supplies, CDs and video games. Fill with glue, crayons, scissors, etc. for a portable arts and crafts box. Fill with bandages, gauze, etc. and keep it in your car as a first-aid kit. Store a box of crayons, small pieces of scrap paper, travel games, etc. inside and keep it in your car as an activity center for your child.

**Marbles** – Can be used to plug holes in your wooden fence.

**Metal Mint and Candy Tins** - Use for your travel sewing kit or aspirin/medicine holder. Use to store memory cards for cameras, video games or keeping video game cartridges.

**Milk Jugs – Plastic** - Take the lids from gallon jugs, paint black and red and use as checker pieces. You will need 24 of them. Make the plastic jugs into hanging flower pots by cutting a hole in the top, placing flowers inside it and then hanging it by the handle. Cut the bottom out of a plastic milk carton and use the top part to cover and protect growing plants in your garden. Use as a scoop for dog/cat/bird feed. Wash and then using a funnel, fill with bird seed for easy storage. Cut a large hole in the side and use to put plastic bags in. Tie a shoelace around the handle and hang it.

**Mouse Pads** - Cut small circles and use as "stoppers" for cabinet doors or as appliance "feet." Use as a place mat or cut, layer and use as a wrist support for the computer keyboard. Using cookie cutters, trace onto a mouse pad. Cut the shape out and then dip into paint. Use to decorate your child's room or give to kids and let them dab onto paper. Cut into strips and place under heavy items so they don't scratch the counter or desk. Use as a cushion between wood and clamps when woodworking.

**Mugs** - Use to store change, as a pencil holder or for temporary storage of screws, nuts, bolts, nails, etc. They make great candy dishes and decorative paperweights. Use as a vase for a bouquet of smaller flowers.

**Nylons** – Cut into strips for plant ties, cut and hem for house socks or attach to a wire coat hanger for a kid's fishing net.

**Paper – Newspaper** - Wad it up and use it as packing material. Use the comics (instead of paper bags) to cover text books. Use to line the bottom of your tent (inside) for insulation. Place plastic over the paper to keep the print from smudging. Fold several layers thick and use as a hot pad when camping. Wrap fragile items for packing/storing. Roll into "logs" for campfires. The thicker the log, the longer it will burn. Use spiral notebook wire to tie the log together. Make the above logs more efficient by cutting them in half and using yarn, string or shoelaces to dip the log into melted down candle wax. The wax-coated log will make for a good fire starter on damp days. Make it into a garden film. Clear an area of weeds in your garden, lay several sheets of newspaper down, and spread mulch on top of it. It will keep most weeds from coming through. Use to clean mirrors.

**Paper – Scrap** - Use any kind of used paper--computer, notebook, newspaper, etc. as wrapping paper. Personalize it with colored pencils, crayons, markers, or paint. Cut it into smaller pieces and keep it by the phone for messages. When doing first drafts of school papers, print on the reverse side of used computer paper, photocopies, etc. For those of you who work in an office, convince your supervisor to use the back of scrap paper for printing lists, memos, taking phone messages, etc. Stress that this will help them save money. Use hole-punches as confetti. Use to make cards. Use pieces for bookmarks. Write down any ideas that pop into your head. Put smaller pieces in your pockets so that you can jot down notes to yourself throughout the day. Use to line your kitty litter box. Shred and save for packing material. Use for wrapping delicate Christmas ornaments for storage. Use for learning origami. Use for making home-made paper. Shred and use to line your hamster/gerbil cage. Use for lining a bird cage. Punch holes along the side and place in a 3-ring binder for school notes. Punch holes along the side and string a shoelace through to make a notebook. Use a cereal box for a front and back cover. Use for grocery lists. Let kids color, paint, etc. on the back of used paper. Color both sides of the paper whatever color you like, cut into very thin strips and then use as "grass" for the Easter baskets. Take used copier paper from work and donate to daycare centers for the kids to draw on. Give lined computer paper to children learning how to write cursive.

**Pencil Box** - Store game pieces. Fill with pencils and store in a drawer at home. Let kids use for a jewelry box. Let kids use as a cash register when playing "store". Store first aid supplies in it, rubber-band it shut and keep in closet, garage, basement, car, etc. Be sure to place in a plastic baggie first to keep supplies dry. Use in the kitchen for orderly storage of soup mixes, taco seasonings, tea bags, etc. Use for a coupon box.

**Picture Frame** - Keep in the kitchen and slip a recipe card into it when cooking to keep it clean. Use for storage of awards/pictures you no longer wish to display. Several will fit in a frame. Store the frame flat in a closet. If you are bored with the look of a wooden frame, stain it a different color and reuse it. Let children decorate a wooden frame with paint and then allow them to hang it in their room with their own art work inside it. Save the glass and backing of standard size

frames for when others break. Use for hanging emergency phone numbers and instructions in the basement or garage. Replace the glass with a mirror and hang it for a new look. Make a small picture frame (wallet size or 3x5) into a coaster. Glue something soft (material, etc.) to the back so it does not scratch your table. Use the cardboard backing as a fire starter. Glue your child's artwork to the cardboard backing of a picture frame. Display on a wall or as a standup without the need for a frame. If a wooden frame is broken, simply glue or nail it back together.

**Plastic Candy Containers** - Fill with aspirin or decongestants and keep in your purse, travel bag or backpack. Fill with salt or pepper to take camping. Fill with sugar or creamer and take with you in the car when bringing a thermos of coffee for long road trips.

**Plastic Containers** - Use as an inexpensive alternative to Tupperware to store leftovers. Use butter bowls as flower pots. Punch holes in the bottom if necessary and put the lid underneath to catch excess water. Poke holes in a butter bowl and use it as a colander. Paint the outside of a butter bowl festively and then use it for an Easter basket. Use butter bowls for storage of chess pieces. Use butter bowls as cereal bowls. Use butter bowls as an outdoor water dish for dogs during the summer. Use butter bowls as a food dish for smaller pets. Keep a butter bowl in the car for when you take a pet for a ride. Bring a jug of water and allow your pet to drink.

**Plastic Utensils** - If possible DON'T BUY!!! Use silverware. Store the plastic utensils you get from fast-food restaurants in your car and use them for on-the-road meals or when drive-thru forgets to give you utensils. Take on camping trips or picnics (but don't throw them out). Reuse them until they break. Send to school in your kid's lunchbox. Make sure they bring them home for reuse! Use as plant supports for droopy seedlings. Keep a spoon by the coffee at work for sugar. Keep a spoon in your desk drawer at work for stirring your coffee (so you don't have to use a stirring stick). Collect and take to work for office parties. Wash and reuse when the festivities are over. Let kids use a knife for cutting clay or play-dough. Give to kids for playing "house" or "restaurant." Keep a set in your desk drawer at work in case you forget yours when you bring lunch.

**Pools - Children's Plastic** - Fill with water and let your pet play in it on hot summer days. Flip it over and use for covering small plants from the frost in warmer climates. Poke holes in the bottom, fill with potting soil and plant a garden in it. Use as a sandbox. Flip it over and use it for a sandbox cover. Use as an outdoor dog bath. Keep on the floor of the basement and use for storage of wet/dirty clothes before washing. Fill with water and put at the entrance to an adult-sized pool. Grass will come off in the little pool and not the big one. Line with a blanket and use as a pet bed.

**Prescription Bottles** - Use for safe storage of thumbtacks, paperclips, coins, dollars, nuts and bolts. You can wash and use for storage of salt, sugar, pepper, etc. when camping or to store bulk spices in the kitchen. Peel off label, fill with aspirin or decongestants and put in your purse, bag or backpack.

**Pretzel Tins** – Make mothproof containers for woolens.

**Shoelaces** - Save and use for anything you would use string for. Store in your travel first aid kit and use for an emergency tourniquet. Wash. Tie the ends of the curly, stretchable type (that you don't need to tie), and use as a hair band. Attach one end to your child's mittens and run the other end through the sleeve of their coat to prevent mitten loss. Use as a ribbon on packages wrapped in homemade wrapping paper. Carry a spare in your purse, car or gym bag in case you break one. Use as an emergency belt for your child. Tie a couple together for an adult belt. Use to hang ornaments from the Christmas tree. Braid three or more together to make bracelets. Attach to ceiling fans/lighting fixtures as a pull chain. Use as curtain tie-backs. College students can use to hang dorm room keys around their neck. Use to tie plants to a plant support. Use to hang a small bird feeder from a tree. Use as a replacement drawstring on hoods, sweatpants, etc. Keep in camping gear in case rope on tent breaks. String nuts and washers through for orderly storage. Roll into a coil, secure with glue or thread and use as a coaster or a hot pad.

**Shower Curtain** - Use as a tarp for grills, wood, etc. Makes a great cover for your table while the kids make arts and crafts. Cut and make into a curtain for the bathroom window. Line the trunk of your car with it when transporting dirty items. Use to cover your outdoor plants when the weather drops to freezing or as a drop cloth to cover the floor/furniture when you are painting.

**Spice Containers** - Buy spices in bulk and store them in previously used containers. Fill with sugar and use for sprinkling sugar on cereal. This takes up less room than a sugar bowl. Fill with Confectioner's sugar, and use when sprinkling on plain cake or cupcakes. Use food coloring to dye sugar different colors, fill the containers with the different colors and then use when sprinkling on Christmas cookies. Store rubber bands, paper clips, etc. Store smaller game pieces. Storage of sugar, salt, pepper when camping. Use for a pencil/pen holder.

**Suitcase** - Use for storage of children's toys. It will fit under the bed and it is ready for travel to a friend's house. Use as an extra dresser if you don't have enough room for all your clothes. Keep in the closet or under your bed. Use for storage of out-of-season clothing to free up closet space. Make into a sentimental storage unit. First paint the suitcase the color of your choice, then glue photocopies of family pictures, greeting cards, etc. to the outside, finishing with a protective coating. Use this to store Christmas ornaments or valued mementos.

**Tires** - Use as a large flower pot for your yard. Place in your backyard and fill with sand for a children's sand box. Use a large sheet of plywood for a cover. Attach to a tree and use as a swing. Hang from a tree and throw a football through it. Cut open and use as lining for horse stalls. Place in the desired area, fill with soil, then plant melons or other plants which require mounds.

**Toilet Paper Rolls** - Stuff an extra set of stockings into a tube and keep in your desk drawer at work, your glove compartment, etc. in case of a run. Ask local schools if they need them for art projects. Wrap double-sided tape around the tube, stick one or two fingers in the middle and roll over clothing, furniture, etc. to remove lint. Tape one end of yarn/string to the tube. Wrap the string around the tube and then hook the end into a notch cut into the edge of the tube. It makes for easy storage. Stuff a few plastic bags into the tube and then place the tube in the glove compartment of your car. It will keep them tidy and on-hand for when you need them. Use for wrapping party gifts by inserting the gift, pinching and taping the ends closed and then decorating. Use for storing long pieces of ribbon which have been saved from packages. This will keep the ribbon smooth. Use in place of a peat pot. Fill with potting soil, place in a plastic butter/ice cream tub, plant the seed and water. When the plants sprout, plant the seedling (tube and all) in the ground.

**Toothbrushes** – Can be used for polishing your shoes or cleaning between the tiles in your bathroom/kitchen. You can also use for cleaning threaded mechanical parts, greasy auto parts or even your comb.

**Wagon** – Perfect for transporting gardening tools around the yard, moving wood to keep the fire stoked, bring groceries to the front door, moving larger bulky items around the house and getting the garbage out to the street on trash day. They make good places to store automotive tools in the garage and can be moved to where you need the tools. You can remove the wheels and handle to make a pet bed or a storage container for the basement.

These ideas have been collected from several sources. Thank you to everyone that has contributed. Please contact us if you have any suggestions you would like to add and share.