

Flora & Fauna

6 Clever and Cheap Gardening Hacks

Spring is here and the peak planting season will soon be upon us. Make your garden even more successful by trying some of these inexpensive and smart tricks:

1. Soak seeds in warm water 24 hours before sowing.

This speeds up the germination process and ensures seeds get ready to put down roots a little faster.

2. Place eggshells underneath tomato plants.

Save your eggshells from breakfast by storing them in a plastic bag in the freezer. When the time is right to plant your tomatoes, put a handful of crushed shells underneath the plan. The roots will absorb the calcium from the shells and produce larger, healthier plants that can fight off disease and produce more fruit.

3. Attach measuring tape to the handle of your rake.

Expert gardeners might be able to eyeball distance with a fair amount of accuracy, but for the rest of us, some measuring tape is essential to making sure plants are properly spaced out. Use some clear packing tape to attach measuring tape to the handle of your rake. Now when you need to measure out your rows or even just see how tall your plants have gotten, you'll have a handy measuring tool right at your fingertips.

4. Keep garden tools clean with a pot full of oily sand.

Buy some building sand from your local home and garden center. Then stop by the local pharmacy to pick up a bottle of mineral oil. Toss the sand and mineral oil together in a bucket until well-mixed. Grab a pot (one you don't plan on using for plants), place some tape over the drainage holes, and then fill it with the oily sand. After using your gardening tools, slip them blade-down into the sand. The abrasive sand will get rid of dirt and grime while the oil will prevent rust.

5. Kill weeds with dish soap and vinegar.

You can make your own super-effective weed killer by mixing 1 teaspoon of dish soap to 2 cups of white vinegar. Pour it into a spray bottle and then attack those weeds!

Note: This powerful herbicide will kill ALL plants, not just the weeds you don't want. So be sure to avoid getting it on any plants you'd like to keep.

6. Control slugs with a dish of beer.

Slugs are a common garden pest that can wreak havoc on your garden. They eat leaves, fruit, roots, and can quickly destroy your garden. You can trap and kill slugs by placing a shallow dish (an empty tuna can or sour cream container works well) full of beer in your garden. The slugs will come by for a drink, fall in, and drown. Check the trap every few days, clean it out, and refill it.

Clean Bee

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Cleaning Corner: Garage Cleaning Tips

If your garage has become the “catch-all” spot for all the miscellaneous junk in your home—to the point where there's no room for your vehicle or the stuff you really want—it's time to clean it out and make your garage space usable again.

1. **Pull everything out.** EVERYTHING. It's easier to assess your items and available storage with an empty space where nothing is hiding out of sight.
2. **Purge the junk.** Even if it's “usable,” if YOU haven't used it in the past 12 months, get rid of it. Toss broken and damaged items into the trash and place usable (but unwanted) items into a “donate” pile.
3. **Organize into groups.** Sort what's left into logical groupings, e.g., holiday decorations, sporting equipment, tools, gardening supplies, toys, etc.
4. **Store smart.** Use clear storage bins, shelving racks, and peg boards to neatly store all your items. Park your car in your newly reclaimed space and enjoy your garage again!

May

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| 1707 | Great Britain was formed from a union between England and Scotland |
| 1494 | During his second journey of exploration in the New World, Christopher Columbus discovers the island of Jamaica |
| 1607 | The first permanent English settlement in America was established at Jamestown, Virginia |
| 1893 | The Wall Street Crash of 1893 began as stock prices fell dramatically. By the end of the year, over 600 banks closed, 15,000 businesses went bankrupt, and unemployment rose to 20% |
| 1945 | Germany agreed to an unconditional surrender, ending World War II in Europe |
| 1992 | The 27 th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, prohibiting Congress from giving itself pay raises |

Healthy Living: Burn More Calories with Circuit Training

If your current workout routine has you feeling a little bored, there's a good chance you're not getting the benefits or results you really want. To keep your workouts exciting and ensure you're getting the most out of every session, consider changing things up with some circuit training.

Circuit training is one of the best and most efficient ways to incorporate resistance training, strength training, and cardio into one calorie-burning workout. To get your heart pumping, try this 20-minute circuit routine. Grab a set of free weights and do each exercise for 1 full minute (no cheating!). If you still need more of a challenge, do it again for a total of 40 fat-busting minutes.

1. Push-ups

2. Squats

3. Lateral raises

Hold weights at your sides and slowly bring your arms up to shoulder height straight out at your sides, then back down.

4. Lunges

5. High knee raises.

Raise your knees to hip-height.

6. Jumping jacks

7. Crunches

8. Burpees

9. Donkey kicks

Get down on your hands and knees and alternately kick each leg back like a donkey.

10. Bicep curls

11. Plank

12. Front raises

The same as a lateral raise, except bring your arms up in front of you.

13. Wall sits

14. Tricep extensions

15. Hamstring curls

16. Jog in place

17. Bicycle crunches

From a sit-up position, pedal your feet in the air as if you're riding a bicycle.

18. Fire hydrants

Get on your hands and knees and alternately raise each knee. You'll look like a dog at a fire hydrant.

19. Russian twist crunches

Start in a sit-up position with your feet flat on the floor. Sit up and hold your arms in front of you, then twist from side to side while leaning back slightly.

20. Mountain climbers

Start in a plank position and then alternately draw your knees up as fast as you can.

Kid Corner: 8 Awesome Outdoor Activities to Try This Month

With warmer weather upon us, it's time head outside with the kids for some fresh air and exercise. Try some of these super fun activities with your little ones to help you maximize your outdoor enjoyment.

1. **Make "Lawn Art."** Grab an old plain light-colored bedsheet and spread it out on the lawn. Use plant stakes to hold the corners down securely. Give your kids some tempera paint and brushes, and let them create their own masterpiece.
2. **Make a Birdfeeder.** Tie a string around a pine cone, cover it in peanut butter (or vegetable shortening, if anyone has peanut allergies), and roll it in birdseed. Hang it on a tree for the birds to enjoy.
3. **Have a "Kid Car Wash."** Grab the hose and fill a couple buckets with soapy water. Give the kids a few sponges and rags and let them wash all their toy cars, bikes, and scooters. It's fun, plus it gets rid of all the dust and grime that accumulated over the winter!
4. **Nature Color Match.** Grab a variety of free paint swatches from the local home improvement store. Invite kids to look through the swatches and explore their backyard to see if they can find colors in nature to match the swatches.
5. **Make Stick Figures.** Have your kids look around for sticks, twigs, leaves, flowers, and other little "goodies" from nature. Give each child a sheet of paper, some glue, and twine. Help them tie their sticks together to make a "stick figure" and then use the glue to attach leaves, acorns, and other objects as clothes and hair. (Hint: A pair of googly eyes really bring them to life!)
6. **Photo Scavenger Hunt.** For kids who are really attached to their phones, encourage them to explore nature with a fun photo scavenger hunt. Create a list of outdoor items, such as pink flowers, a frog, a feather, three pinecones arranged in a triangle, etc. Ask kids to take a picture of each item on the list. Whoever completes the list or gets the most within an hour wins a special prize!
7. **Make Your Own Raft Race.** Pick up a section of rain gutter from the local home improvement store, plus two end caps. Seal the endcaps on either end of the gutter with bathtub caulk. Fill the gutter with water to create your "race track." Invite kids to gather outdoor materials to build a raft, such as twigs, leaves, wood chips, etc. Have some twine and glue on hand, plus some paper to create a sail. Once the rafts are built, race them down the gutter by blowing the sails to see who wins!
8. **Make Mud Pies.** Give kids an empty pie tin and let them cook up a delicious mud pie! To prevent them from digging in your flower beds, designate a space in your backyard where they can dig up as much dirt as they want. Leaves, twigs, and flowers all make great mud pie "decorations."

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup (4 oz) salted butter, frozen
- 2 1/2 cups (10 oz) self-rising flour
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup chilled heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup chopped fresh strawberries
- 2 tablespoons salted butter, melted

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 475°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Grate the frozen butter using large holes of a box grater. Toss together grated butter, flour, sugar, and baking powder in a large bowl. Chill 10 minutes.
2. Make a well in the center of the mixture. Add the cream, and stir 10 times. Add the strawberries, and stir 5 times. (Dough will be loose and flaky.)
3. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface, and gently knead 3 to 4 times. Lightly sprinkle flour over top of dough. Using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll dough into a 3/4-inch-thick rectangle (about 9 x 5 inches). Starting at 1 short end, fold dough in half so short ends meet. Repeat rolling and folding procedure 4 more times.
4. Roll the dough to 1-inch thickness. Cut dough with a floured 2 1/2" round cutter, and place on prepared baking sheet, rerolling dough scraps and flouring as needed.
5. Bake until lightly browned, about 15 minutes. Brush warm biscuits with melted salted butter.

6 Tips for a More Organized Laundry Room

Laundry rooms are notorious for being cramped, unorganized, messy places, but that doesn't have to be the case! Check out these handy tips for transforming your cluttered laundry room into a charming, clean, and inviting space that you might actually enjoy spending time in!

1. **Create Zones.** Lots of laundry rooms are multi-purpose spaces. They double as mudrooms, pet areas, and extra storage. You can free up the usable space in your laundry room by designating zones where all those "extra" things live. Install hooks on the wall to hold coats and backpacks. Consolidate pet supplies to one corner to prevent them from overtaking the room.
2. **Contain Cleaning Supplies in Bins.** Laundry detergent, dryer sheets, spot removers, clothes pins—rather than let all these items float around your laundry room, sit on top of the machines, or take up space on the floor, contain them all in attractive bins so they're always within easy reach.
3. **Save space with the right shelving.** Wire-rack shelving is great for laundry rooms. Not only is it clean and attractive, but it can also double as a drying rack for items that need to be dried flat. If that doesn't fit your particular style, consider cabinets or floating shelves. Check out www.pinterest.com for some room layout ideas.
4. **Install a rod on the wall.** A rod and hangers in your laundry room really comes in handy for hanging up work shirts and blouses right out of the dryer. By hanging them up right away, fewer wrinkles form which means less ironing for you!
5. **Use multiple baskets to pre-sort clothes.** Rather than dumping all your clothes into one basket and then sifting through everything to sort it into the washer, use multiple baskets or canvas bags to pre-sort clothes throughout the week. When your basket of whites or towels is full, chuck it in the washing machine. You'll be surprised how much time this little tip will save you each week.
6. **Use an outdoor mailbox as a lint trash can.** Rather than let a trashcan take up precious floor space, install an outdoor mailbox on the wall to hold lint, used dryer sheets, and other small trash.

Carpet Talk: Expert Rug Care Tips

Area rugs and entryway rugs add color and beauty to a space. And, just like regular carpet, they require regular cleanings to make sure they always look their best.

It's easy to forget about rugs and assume they're just not getting that dirty, but the opposite is true. They can hold an impressive amount of dirt, allergens, and germs, which can impact your family's health.

To keep your rugs looking and performing their best, follow these tips:

Vacuum Weekly

Just like the rest of the carpet in your home, your rugs need weekly vacuuming to remove dry soil and dirt that gets tracked in on the bottoms of shoes and paws.

Follow the Label for Cleaning

The material your rug is made out of heavily determines the type of deep cleaning it needs, and, just like your clothes, you'll usually find instructions on the tag.

- **Synthetic** rugs typically respond well to hot water extraction.
- **Silk and rayon rugs** need to be dry cleaned and groomed.
- **Wool and natural fibers** require special cleaning detergents to prevent colors from bleeding.

If your rug is looking a little worse for wear, call the professionals to give it a thorough deep cleaning.