



Teabags, bras and tights; gardening on a budget!

Fact Sheet 1

There are lots of household items we have either forgotten how to use in our gardens or because of the consumer lifestyles we now lead have never been shown how to use. These can save you time and lots of money; heres a few to try;

1. Aspirin: simple water dissolvable aspirin, one tablet into a pint of water can feed your sickly houseplants for up to a month.
2. Epsom salts: Using Epsom salt in gardening is not a new concept. This "best kept secret" has been around for many generations, Epsom salt helps improve flower blooming and enhances a plant's green colour. It can even help plants grow bushier. Epsom salt is made up of hydrated magnesium sulphate (magnesium and sulphur), which is important to healthy plant growth.
Most plants can be misted with a solution of 2 tablespoons of Epsom salt per gallon of water once a month. For more frequent watering, every other week, cut this back to 1 tablespoon.

With roses, you can apply a foliar spray of 1 tablespoon per gallon of water for each foot of the shrub's height. Apply in spring as leaves appear and then again after flowering.

For tomatoes and peppers, apply 1 tablespoon of Epsom salt granules around each transplant or spray (1 tbsp. per gallon) during transplanting and again following the first bloom and fruit set.

3. Baking soda: Baking soda, or sodium bicarbonate, is an effective and safe fungicide on the treatment of powdery mildew and several other fungal diseases. The best concentration of baking soda is a 1 percent solution. The remainder of the solution can be water, but coverage on the leaves and stems is better if some sunflower oil or soap is added to the mixture.
4. Shower caps: When you take a trip to your local hotel acquire a few shower caps. They are excellent propagation cases to pop over pots once you have taken cuttings or sown your seed; they are elasticated to help seal in the humidity. Don't forget once a day you'll need to turn the cap inside out to release the moisture build up and lower the humidity that can lead to fungal diseases.

5. Soap: Clean up your act! Soap is a remarkably versatile, almost-magic potion. This everyday household staple tackles a laundry list of garden chores indoors and out: grime, pests, sticky blades, poison ivy, and more..

Kill bugs. Insecticidal soap kills most soft-bodied insects like pesky aphids by dehydration but you have to actually spray the bug to kill it. Repeat applications may be necessary to get control of a burgeoning pest population. Carefully note label warnings for plants susceptible to damage by this product.

Repel deer. Highly fragrant bar soap hung in vulnerable shrubs and trees offends (and repels) a deer's delicate sense of smell. The trick is to make bar soap ornaments look better than deer damage.

Stop slugs and snails. First thing in the morning or after a rain, handpick slugs and snails off your plants and drop the leaf ravaging molluscs into a bucket of soapy water, otherwise known as a bubbly grave!

Clean up indoor plants. Remove dusty build-up and other indoor contaminants from houseplant foliage by spraying with a mild soap solution and wiping the leaves clean; especially important during winter months when plants may struggle to get enough light.

Act as a spreader/sticker. For improved performance of spray on disease controls, add a squirt of mild dish soap to help the formula adhere to the plant. Always be sure to read the label of fungicides and dormant spray solutions because many already contain a spreader/sticker.

Make water wetter. Apply a very mild soap and water solution to dried-out houseplants and seedling trays. As a natural surfactant, soap breaks surface tension and helps water penetrate even the most resistant soils.

Lubricate saws. Swipe a bar of soap over the blade of your hand saw to help it go through wood more easily for straight, accurate cuts and less work for you.

6. Lard: Lard is fat that is rendered from butchered pigs, and its use dates back for centuries for cooking, soaps, lubricants and as plant fertilizer. For plants that are heavy feeders such as roses, lard is an ideal candidate for fertilizer. Planting lard into the ground with the roses when they are young is the best way to ensure the roses obtain the maximum feeding from the lard.

7. Bananas: Like all plants, bananas contain important nutrients. You can recycle these back into your garden to build soil and plant health. Potassium. This mineral helps promote general plant vigour; build up resistance to pest and disease; is necessary to help fruit develop; is involved in regulating around 50 enzymes in a plant; and relates to the turgor (or uprightness of stems and the thickness of cell walls) i.e. plant strength! This is extremely important for plants like staghorns which literally hang onto tree trunks in nature and vertical vegetables like spring onions, leeks and fruiting crops.

Cut your banana skins into strips and place at the base of planting holes before planting or hoe into the soil around your plants; place in your compost to return to your garden once the compost has been allowed to cure.

8. Milk: amino acids, proteins, enzymes and natural sugars that make milk a food for humans and animals are the same ingredients in nurturing healthy communities of microbes, fungi and beneficial bacteria in your compost and garden soil. Milk can be used to spray on foliage to reduce powdery mildew and can be an insecticide for soft bodied insects that are munching on your valuable plants.
9. Tea: acid loving plants that are looking a little peaky love a cup of tea to perk them up! Steep your teabags in a bucket of water for three weeks and pour the liquid directly at the base of your rhododendrons, azaleas, pieris or camellias; this is an instant liquid feed and the results will be seen within three or four days of application.
10. Eggs: The shells of eggs can be used whole as seed planters to raise individual seed or as small candle holders for garden decoration. Crushed they can deter slugs and snails plus if you suffer from blossom end rot on your tomatoes adding half a dozen crushed egg shell to your composts per plant will increase the calcium content enough to guard against blossom end rot occurrences.
11. Wallpaper paste: organic wallpaper paste especially the coloured variety can help you to sow fine seed either by sprinkling the seed in to the dry powder or making a liquid to pour into a planting hole. Also if you spraying plants for fungal diseases the coloured paste can be used so you can tell where you have sprayed; you can leave this on the plant for up to eight hours and then simply wash it off.
12. Silicone sealant: ever wanted a plant support that's invisible? Using outdoor clear silicone sealant on young plants you are trying to train gives you this effect; place a good blob of the sealant on the wall or fence and then let it go tacky. Push the stem into it and there you have it:, a place support you'll never see, doesn't rot and roots or buds can penetrate through if necessary.

13. Vacuum cleaner fluff: This is full of the bits that drop off us, our pets and food waste; essentially fertiliser for free. At the very least you should be popping this on your compost heap but also mixi it into your potting compost; great plant food totally free!!
14. Deterring cats: cats can be pesky critters, scratching and toileting where we don't want them to. An old teabag sprayed with a deep heat type spray buried just below the soils surface will deter cats and squirrels as they hate the smell. Should this not work cocktail sticks pushed into the ground pointy side up will certainly do the trick; cats are creatures of habit, break the habit and you will be on to a winner.
15. Wash day blues for slugs and a hairy tail for snails: Biological washing powder used in a good quantity surrounding your prized plants will stop slugs in their tracks; it gums them up to the point they stick and can only blow bubbles plus await their fate when you come along and dispose of them as you see fit!

Any finally: horse hair really annoys snails. This sets up an electrical charge once the slime comes into contact with it. Use it around the base of your prized plants or tuck into the top of pots; it really works folks, after all have you ever seen a snail on a horse!!

My recipe for marrow rum:

1. Take one large marrow and cut off the stalk end but keep this to re-seal later.
2. Scoop out the inside fully and compost.
3. Fill with molasses or brown sugar plus a few raisins
4. Seal using the stalk end and sticky tape
5. Poke five or six holes in the none stalk end
6. Hang over a bowl using a pair of your good ladies tights
7. Leave for three to six weeks
8. The resulting liquid restrain through a fine kitchen sieve
9. Enjoy your own marrow rum but be careful because it has a bite!!