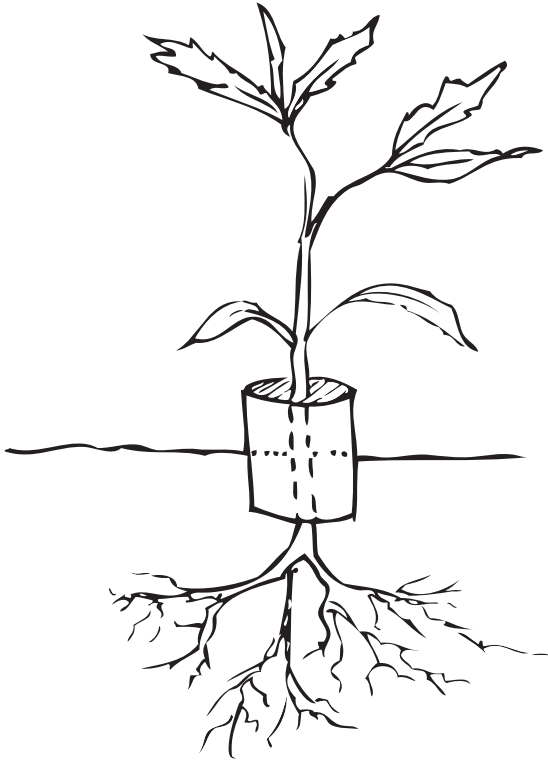


101 ALMOST FREE GARDENING PROJECTS

BY HILERY HIXON



101 Almost Free Gardening Projects

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INTRODUCTION

When I was in third grade, I read in a magazine about an experiment with celery. I went running up to my mother asking if we could do the experiment. She took me to the kitchen and we retrieved a stalk of celery from refrigerator. She helped me make a fresh cut on the end of the stalk, and then I put the stalk in a glass of water. We put several drops of red coloring in the water and left the glass on the kitchen pass-through ledge. As patiently as a third-grader could, I waited three days.

After the three days were up, my mother and I cut the stalk in half and could see the red food coloring in the veins where the celery had taken up the colored water. I was hooked.

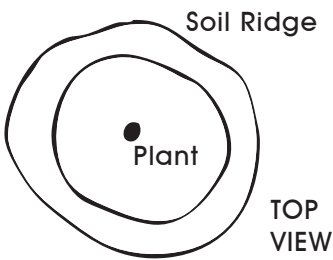
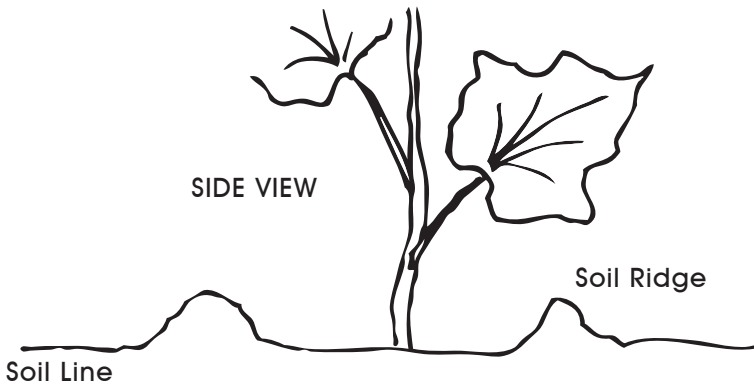
All my life, I have loved projects. This book is a fusion of two of my passions: plants and projects. I created this book to share ideas to interact with the garden without breaking the bank.

Enjoy the projects and adapt them to best suit you and your garden.

Now get out there and grow!

DIRECT WATER WITH MINI BERMS

Watering efficiently not only saves water, it is better for plants as well. Light, frequent watering causes roots to grow just under the surface of the soil. Surface soil dries out quickly, which stresses plants. By watering deeply and less often, root structures of the plants grow deeper into the soil. Deeper roots are better equipped to handle dry spells.



Encourage deeper soaking by building up a small soil ridge around the plant. As far as the plants leaves reach out is the distance that the soil ridge should be from the base of the plant. When it rains or when you water, this ridge creates a reservoir for the plant that will collect water and allow it to soak into the soil. Without the ridge, the water could drain off before completely soaking in.

GARDEN CONTAINERS WITH PEANUT FILLING

Typically I prefer not to use filler with container plants because that means less soil for plant roots. However, with large containers and small plants, filling the entire pot with soil means using a lot of potting mix and it also makes the pot extremely heavy.

Container filler is great for large pots playing host to annual flowers and groupings since these plants usually have shallow root structures.

MATERIALS

- Large container (cleaned and ready to plant)
- Recycled filler material
- Selection of annual flowers



FILLER MATERIAL IDEAS

- Foam packing peanuts
- Aluminum soda cans (washed and crushed)

If your container is very large, it may be ideal to do this project with the pot sitting in its final destination. A fully planted container can be extremely heavy, even with these weight reducing recycled fillers.

Place the filler inside the pot. The depth of the pot depends how much filler you would need. I generally fill the pot up one third with filler. However, if your pot is three feet tall and you are planting it with petunias, you will definitely want to use a lot more filler.

Fill the rest of the container with potting mix and plant normally.

CLOCHE FROM A TWO LITER BOTTLE

A glass cloche is an expensive addition to a gardener's collection. However, a cloche from a two liter bottle is nearly free. A cloche will help save the day in the spring if a sudden cold night threatens new transplants in the garden.

MATERIALS

- Clean 2 liter soda bottle with label removed
- Scissors or sharp utility knife

The bottom third of the bottle has small ridge right below where the label is located. Using the scissors or utility knife, carefully cut along this ridge and discard the bottom portion to the recycling bin.

The cloche is now ready for use. Remove the cap from the bottle and place the cloche over the transplant, being careful that the leaves are not touching the sides of the bottle.



When nightfall is approaching, replace the cap on the bottle to trap the heat inside. This will keep the baby plant nice and toasty.

After the cold spell has passed, remove the cloche completely.

WATCH FOR END OF SEASON SALES

Plant collections can grow by leaps and bounds at the end of a season. Check plant nurseries and garden centers for end of season sales on perennials. Most of the plants on sale are still in good shape and even the ones that need a little love can be purchased at deep discounts. Just give the plant a thorough inspection to make sure there are no infestations of insects or disease problems.

When you get the plant home, give it a good watering. (Never transplant a dry plant.) After a couple hours, plant it in the garden. It will do better in the garden soil than in the pot. Trim off any dead leaves or spent flowers. If it is root bound, tease out the roots with your fingers. Should the roots not budge with teasing, take a clean garden knife and give it a few vertical cuts on the outside edge of the root ball.

After setting the plant in the hole, give it another quick drink. Fill in the hole halfway with soil and pause to give the plant another drink. Finish filling in the hole and water in the plant. This process of watering and filling will help keep the plant from experiencing transplant shock.

These same end of season sales are also a great time to shop for fruit trees. Fruit trees can be pricey, so any discount is welcomed!

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