

Recycling and Upcycling

It is wonderful that our town is having its first EcoSummit this May. It is up to each one of us to make a difference to help our world. We need to change our buying habits and re-use, recycle and upcycle items. Here are some ideas to make beautiful objects from things that would otherwise be thrown away.

Materials:

- Empty 1 or 2 litre plastic milk cartons,
- Felt-tip pens,
- PVA glue,
- Scissors,
- Patterned paper or magazines,
- Paint (watercolour /acrylic).
- Old newspapers or wipe clean table cover,
- Containers as moulds e.g. bowls, plates, vases,
- Clingfilm, plastic wrapping packaging or vaseline,
- Masking tape,
- Cord, thread or string,
- Glass bottle/jar,
- Paper (photocopy, white tissue),
- Stones,
- Cardboard,
- Thread, string, wool,
- Beads, buttons,
- Bits of wood/sticks.

Task 1 – Vase/Box



Start with your milk carton. Mark a line all the way around it, just below the handle, using a pen. Very carefully cut all the way round. Be careful as the edge can be sharp.

Cut the sides into 4 petal shapes so that it resembles the head of a flower. Don't cut down too far – make sure that there is a good bowl depth at the bottom below the petals.





Have a Dabble at Home – Recycling and Upcycling

Fold the 'petals' several times inwards and outwards. To use as a vase have your petals in the upright position. To make a box, fold the petals inwards as a lid.

Have fun decorating your vase/box. You could paint designs on paper and stick them on using PVA glue. Alternatively you could cut pictures from magazines/junk mail as I have done. When the glue is dry you could varnish it with a clear nail polish for greater protection or leave it as it is.



You can do the same thing with large yoghurt pots or plastic bottles.

Task 2 – Papier Mache

If you are going to use a household item for the mould/base shape for your papier mache cover it in clingfilm, some waste packaging thin plastic or a layer of vaseline.

Cover the area you are going to work on with a washable cover or newspaper. It can get messy!

Make a pile of small torn pieces of newspaper. Use quite a bit of glue and begin to cover all over with layers of paper and glue. You can make your own paste using flour and water (1/2 cup of plain flour to 1 cup of water).

I made these over 3 days. Leaving them overnight to dry properly. It can be helpful to do layers in plain newspaper one day then coloured paper the next day.

When you feel you have a good firm shape take off gently from the container and remove the clingfilm.

When dry and hard you can decorate with either acrylic paint or a collage of paper scraps. Make sure that you overlap the layers with PVA glue. You can leave it matt if you prefer or varnish to finish.



Task 3 – Homemade beads

You can make your own beads using recycled materials. You could use scraps of thin plastic (waste packaging for instance), bits of patterned paper or card.

Start by cutting out shapes – they could be roughly rectangular or triangular. They needn't be regular shapes.

If you would like to decorate your materials do this before rolling them up. For plastics you will need to use acrylic paints.

Roll up your material with glue at both ends. Roll from the widest side first towards the thinnest end.

When the glue is dry you are ready to thread your jewellery. Thread your beads onto string, cord or elastic.



Task 4 – Decorative glass bottle

This is an effective idea for empty food or jam jars.

On thin paper (photocopy or white tissue paper) design and paint an attractive design.

Cut your image out and stick it inside your glass jar using PVA glue.

The finished jar/glass looks very attractive on the window sill with light shining through.

This example is from a glass vase bought in a charity shop but old jam jars work really well too.



Task 5 – Stone art

You need to start by collecting and cleaning some stones. You can wash them with washing up liquid. The colour of your stone will be different once it is washed and dried. Depending upon what you want to paint, a flat and smooth surface will make it easier to work on.

Paint a design onto your stone using acrylic paint. You may want to do a base layer of one colour first. This will make your final design appear brighter and stop it seeping into the stone. Let it dry before adding the design. You can use felt-tip pens but they are likely to be less vibrant.

Once the acrylic paint is dry you may want to seal the colour by varnishing the stone. You can do this with PVA glue or clear nail varnish if you don't have any varnish.

An alternative is to stick pictures onto the rock and then cover those with varnish.



Task 6 – Scrap weaving

Start by making yourself a simple loom. Take a piece of sturdy card and cut regular grooves (~1cm deep) along the top and bottom of your loom. Use string or wool to add your warp threads (the ones that run from the top to the bottom). The closer the threads the more difficult it is to work but the tighter your finished material will be.

Use scraps of wool, thread and ribbon to weave on your loom. These are the weft threads (the ones that go from left to right). You can experiment with going over and under alternate threads or changing the pattern for each weft thread.

You can include other found materials into the weave – buttons, beads, sticks, leaves.

When you are finished you will need to cut your warp threads off the loom and tie them along the top and bottom. This will stop your art work falling apart.

In this example, I have sewn a tree onto a woven background.



Task 7 – Found wooden art

Find some pieces of wood or sticks. Look at them from a wide range of angles to see what they look like. Can you see the shape of a creature or a face? Is there a landscape in the grain of the wood?

Paint your creation directly onto the wood using acrylic paint.

