



SEEDS FOR ECO COMMUNITIES
PRESENTS...

UPCYCLING IN YOUR ECO COMMUNITY OR AT HOME



Eco communities are full of innovative and creative individuals who are always looking for ways to cater to environmentally conscious decisions in all areas of living. Included in this, is consideration of both the materials and tools/equipment required to support the project you have in mind. Often eco communities will take recycled items and upscale them, to give them a second life. This fact sheet will identify ways that different eco communities have embraced the saying “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure,” and will help to educate on ways that you can use different recycled or items otherwise headed for the garbage, to help with your next project.

Old Windshield Wiper Motors

The first example of sustainable upscaling in eco communities is the use of old windshield wiper motors. An eco community in the Canadian prairies utilized old windshield wiper motors they found from cars in junkyards to pump water from their well.

How this works is the same as when you use water pumps for draining pools or a flood, a windshield wiper pump is responsible for shooting the wiper fluid onto your windshield to clean it. The pump is designed to suck windshield fluid from the





reservoir, through the supply line, and to the spray nozzle. This eco community took the motor and attached a tube to it, they then dropped the pump in their well to withdraw water.

This is a simple way to help meet community needs such as obtaining fresh drinking water, water for gardens, or simply, for showering!

Bucket Showers

Many eco communities have adopted using recycled buckets or bags to create an off-grid, sustainable shower system that costs next to nothing and leaves little to no impact on the environment.

To make a bucket shower, take a recycled bucket or bag and poke holes through the bottom of it. Once this is done, hang the bucket or bag from a tree branch and fill it with water. The water will come trickling out just like a traditional shower head.

Some people are okay with cold water showers, where others have designed systems that attract sunlight by either placing them in direct sunlight or painting them black to attract the sun, providing a much comfortable off-grid shower experience. The other

method of creating an off-grid shower uses a pump. Pumps can be found in old cars or scrap yards and can be utilized to have longer showers as they continuously pump water into the bucket.

Rain Barrels

This example you have most likely heard of, but it is still something worth highlighting! Many eco communities have rain barrels, some of which are store-bought, others which have been salvaged. Rain barrels can be any form of a bucket that is able to gather rainwater from a collection service. One ecologically conscious community in northern Ontario developed an entire rainwater collection process using only items found at their local dump. The first step was obtaining rain gutters and eavestroughs, so for these the community used PVC piping which they cut in half. After setting up the rain gutters, they used the remaining piping to create a path for rain water to reach the rain barrels. The rain barrel(s) consisted of two garbage buckets found at the dump, and after a thorough clean, the garbage buckets were good as new.





Something to keep in mind is to consider the materials you are salvaging in terms of what they are being used for. For example, some old barrels that may appear as a good structure to support rainwater harvesting, may not be ideal if they have been contaminated with harmful chemicals from their past uses.



Some uses of a rain barrel include using the water to water gardens, drinking it (only if it is put through appropriate treatment to ensure it is safe to consume), using it for cleaning dishes and tools, and showering.

By upscaling rain barrels either at your home or as part of your eco community, you will reduce waste by diverting usable products from the landfill while helping to protect your local watershed - you might even save a few dollars on your water bills!



These were a few simple ideas for innovative off-grid sustainable items that you can incorporate within your eco community or home, and there are endless possibilities of what you can create. You just have to have your eyes open for materials and always remain in the mindset of "one man's trash is another man's treasure!"