

# Ways to save on gardening

Get your garden in shape for less with our money-saving tips, from composting to cheap Best Buy lawnmowers

## Composting

### 9 Make your own compost

Composting kitchen and garden waste will save you pounds on buying soil improver and mulch – it isn't the same stuff as you use for potting and sowing plants, though. Check with your local council if they sell discounted composting bins. If you're worried about attracting rats, remember not to use cooked waste.

### 10 Care for soil

Mulching and digging in plenty of soil improver, well-rotted

## Freebies

### 1 Free stuff

Before buying garden equipment, check if you can get it free on [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org). Donated by Freecycle members in your local area, everything on the website is free and you can find all sorts up for grabs. Be quick to reply and ready to pick up your item.

Swap your excess plants, unwanted bulbs, and unsown seeds at [www.gardenswapshop.co.uk](http://www.gardenswapshop.co.uk). You can sign up for free, browse the items on offer and, if something takes your fancy, start swapping immediately. You can also use it to declutter your own garden.

Online gardening retailer [www.hiddeneden.com](http://www.hiddeneden.com) is giving away free packets of seeds to anyone who wants to grow their own as part of its 'Get Britain Growing' campaign. Register your details on the site and choose free flower or veg seeds.

### 2 Create plants for free

Taking plant cuttings, dividing established plants and collecting seeds are just some of the ways you can create new plants free of charge. Swap your spares with friends and family and your garden will soon be full to bursting with new plants.

### 3 Make your own plant supports

The simplest and best plant supports that *Which?* Gardening experts found in tests were 'pea sticks', which are nothing more fancy than twiggy stems pushed into the ground to hold up floppy plants in wind and rain.

### 4 Grow your own

Save money on your grocery bills by growing your own fruit and veg. Pick gourmet varieties that would be expensive to buy rather than cheap crops such as potatoes. See p38 for our guide to growing fruit and veg.

## Equipment

### 5 Do you need heat?

Consider whether you really need to heat your whole greenhouse over winter. You could save money by either sectioning off a smaller area to heat using bubble plastic, or getting a heated propagator so that you only provide heat for the plants that really need it.

### 6 Hire, don't buy

Some tools, for example rotavators, are cheaper to hire than buy as you only need to use them once or twice a year. Hiring also means you don't have to bother finding space to store them.

### 7 Give us a hand

Good for small gardens, hand cylinder mowers are generally cheaper than electric and petrol mowers. The Husqvarna Novocut 64 is a *Which?* Gardening Best Buy, available for £79.95 plus grass collector at £14.95 from [www.greenwarehouse.co.uk](http://www.greenwarehouse.co.uk) – about £80 cheaper than the top electric mower.



### 8 Roll out the barrow

Want a cheap wheelbarrow? The Best Buy B&Q Sovereign £40, will save you nearly £40 over the most expensive barrow on test. Visit [www.which.co.uk/wheelbarrows](http://www.which.co.uk/wheelbarrows).







manure and garden compost each year will improve your soil no end. The better your soil is, the more your plants will thrive.

**11 Get free manure**  
Even in the heart of the city you'll find stables in your local directory.

Many of them are more than happy to let you take manure for free, as it saves them the bother of disposing of it. Remember never to use manure when it's fresh as it can burn plant roots. Instead, let it rot down until it's dark brown and crumbly.

## Recycling

### 12 Back to the fuchsia

Many summer bedding plants don't need to be thrown away in the autumn as they can be kept in a frost-free place over winter to flower again the following year. Examples include pelargoniums, fuchsias and osteospermums.



**13 Trickle treat**  
Installing a water butt is a great way to use rainwater and save on your water bills if you have a meter. *Which?* Gardening recommends the Best Buy Harcostar Space Saver Water Butt, which can hold 200 litres (22 gallons). It costs £29.95, but you can get it for £24.95 on Amazon.

### MEMBER OFFER

Look out for the 'Gardens to Visit' booklet with the May issue of *Which?* Gardening. You'll find 'buy one ticket, get one free' offers on more than 200 gardens around the country.



## Thrifty tips

### 14 Choose plants wisely

Garden centres are designed to tempt you with colourful displays of plants that are full of flower. The best advice is to blinker your eyes and bring a list of plants that you have checked will be suitable for the conditions your garden has to offer, such light and soil type. The wrong plant in the wrong place will never thrive for you.

**15 Buy bulbs**  
Buy plants such as daffodils and dahlias when they are bulbs. They'll be at least half the cost of waiting a few months and buying them as growing plants in containers.

**16 Check casualty corner**  
Most garden centres have a 'casualty corner' where they sell off plants



cheaply that aren't looking at their best. While some may have pests or disease, many aren't looking so good just because they've finished flowering. A bit of TLC and patience will see them looking as good as new.

**17 Change where you shop**  
Garden centres are often rather expensive in terms of plants, as most buy in the

plants they sell. Ask friends and neighbours where they'd recommend in your area and check [www.which-local.co.uk](http://www.which-local.co.uk). Nurseries that grow their own plants are often the best value and often have more unusual plants.

### 18 Watch out for plant fairs

Plant fairs at local fêtes and garden openings for charity are a great way of getting hold of cheap plants. You can find some real gems among the spider plants and leggy tomatoes. Those in the know arrive early to get their hands on the best stuff.

### 19 Don't be fooled

Watch out for unscrupulous plant stalls at gardening shows selling plants such as poppies, which are annuals and so won't return the following year unless you collect the seed and resow it. They often sell them for the same price as perennials, which do last from year to year.

### 20 Feeling fruity

If you're keen on growing fruit, skip the garden centres and head to a discount store instead. **Low-cost supermarket Lidl is currently selling a variety of fruit trees for just £3.99 – a major saving on the £20 or more often charged by plant nurseries.**

### 21 Tree-mendous

If you want to invest in a tree, smaller (and hence cheaper) specimens settle in better than larger ones. Prepare the planting hole well with lots of soil improver and stake the tree when young. Don't let grass grow up to the base of the tree as it competes for nutrients and water.

