



Nuthouse Mama Container Garden using Recycled Material

by *Andie Hendrickson*

*inspired by Orchard Africa and their work in
South Africa*



Gather Your Materials:

- (1-3) 2-liter soda bottles WITH CAPS (or other large plastic beverage containers)
- Marker
- Utility knife
- Sharp nail
- scissors
- thick twine or jute rope
- Measuring tape or ruler
- Potting soil (not pictured)
- Seedlings (preferably less than 6" tall, 1 per container)



Prepare Your Containers:

1. Rinse out the containers and remove any labels, if desired
2. ON EACH CONTAINER, using your marker, draw the outline of the area to be cut out of the bottle.
 - If you are using the 2 liter bottles to stack horizontally, you will want to draw a rounded rectangular shape out of the center, but not going more than a third of the way down. (see picture)



- If you are using the 2 liter bottle vertically (standing up) or another beverage container, you will draw a line around approximately the top third of the bottle, leaving enough of the bottom to provide ample room for plant roots. (see picture)



3. Using the utility knife, pierce the bottle in the center of the area you want to cut out. This will give you a starting point for the scissors which are MUCH EASIER and SAFER to use when cutting the bottles. (Please trust me on this. I've glued people back together who "slipped" with the knife. Scissors are our friends. **Note that this photo is staged just for reference. DO NOT cut bottle while facing the sharp part of the utility knife at any part of your anatomy.**)



4. Using the SCISSORS 😊 cut the bottle along your marker line. Be careful. Please.



Now you should have containers that look like this (I've already marked the drainage holes in the picture, don't worry – you're about to do that):



5. Once your bottle is cut (either the middle section of a 2 liter being used horizontally or the top of the 2 liter bottle or other container is removed), it is time to create some drainage holes in the bottom of the container so that the soil has good drainage. Using your marker, make four to five evenly spaced dots on the bottom of your container.



6. Use the utility knife VERY CAREFULLY to start each drainage hole. Once the plastic is pierced, you can use the sharp nail or scissors to push through the hole and make it larger. You don't want the holes much bigger than the nail hole. Remember, we DO want the soil to be able to drain some but still maintain some moisture.



7. Next, you will mark the "hanging" holes that you will be stringing the twine through to hang the container.
- For the horizontal 2 liter bottles:
 - Mark two dots on the TOP of the container (where you cut out your rounded rectangle opening) on either end of the container about 1.5" – 2" from your opening. (see yellow dots on picture).
 - Mark an additional two dots on the BOTTOM of the container, directly underneath the dots you made on the top of the container. (see red dots on picture) You will be threading the twine from the bottom and up through the top, so you want these to be pretty lined up.



- For vertical containers:
 - Mark two dots on either side of the container, being sure to leave at least 1.5"-2" of rim space between the edge of the container and your dots. (You will be threading the twine through these and they will hold the weight of the soil and plant, so it's important to give enough rim that the twine doesn't pull through all the way and break your container.)



8. Once again, use the utility knife VERY CAREFULLY to start these hanging holes. Seriously, be careful. You may want to use the scissors to gently increase the diameter of these holes so that you can easily string your twine through them.
9. At this point, if you have successfully created your drainage and hanging holes without injury to yourself or others, give yourself a treat. I'm proud of you. And thankful. Good job. Put the utility knife away. Up high. Away from the kids and the dogs. And cats, if you have them.
10. Next you will want to measure out your twine. If you are doing the horizontally stacked bottles like in the example, I suggest measuring out about two lengths of twine, each 6 feet long. If you are doing the vertical containers, one 2 foot length of twine should be fine. You will have to decide for yourself in regards to how and where you are hanging your containers.



For the horizontally stacked 2 liter bottles:

1. Cut two lengths of twine, each about 6 feet long.
2. Tie a doubled knot at the bottom of each length of twine. (you just want a knot big enough to not pull through the hole at the bottom of the container.)



3. Thread the twine through the hanger hole closest to the neck of the bottle on the bottom of the bottle (which will be the bottom bottle of the stack) and up through the top hanger hole directly above that bottom hole so that the twine goes up straight through the bottle and the knot is securely on the OUTSIDE of the bottom hole.



4. Do the same thing with the second length of twine using the hanger holes nearest the former bottom of the bottle (starting with the bottom hole and going up through the top hole).



5. Using your measuring tape or ruler and marker, mark about 10" past the top of the bottle on the twine on both lengths of twine. This will be where you will tie another double knot to sit at the base of the second bottle.
6. Once you have made your marks, tie double knots on each length of twine and check to be sure they are about even with each other. Adjust as needed.



7. Thread your twine again as you did with the first bottle – up through the bottom hanger holes and out through the top hanger holes, leaving the knot to hold the bottle in place at the bottom. Continue steps 5-7 for as many bottles you have in your stack. (I don't recommend more than three bottles because you want to leave about 10 inches in between the bottles for plant growth.)



8. Once all of your bottles are strung, tie the tops of the lengths of twine together.
9. Congratulations! You are ready to plant!!!!

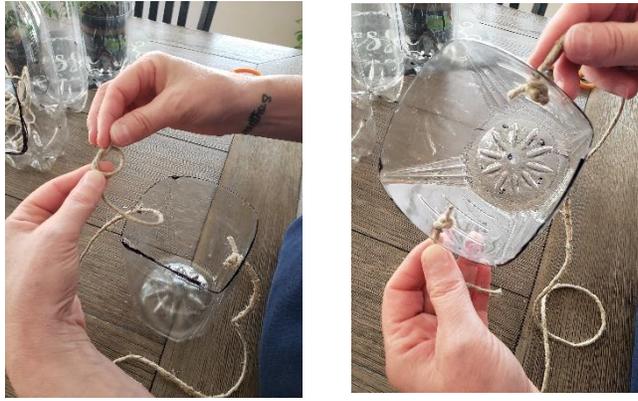


For the vertical single containers:

1. Tie a doubled knot on one end of the twine and thread the twine through one of the hanger holes.



2. Thread the twine through the opposite hanger hole and tie a doubled knot.



3. Congratulations! You are ready to plant!!!



Yahooo!!! You are ready to plant your seedlings!!! (for my example here, I used English Thyme and Rosemary that my awesome daughter in love found at WalMart – the plants themselves are a little bigger than I would usually use, but they were all that was available. I split the Thyme into two and planted the Rosemary in the single container.)

Plant your Seedlings:

1. Place some potting soil into the bottom of the containers. (Don't fill them up all the way - you still need room for your plants.)



- Carefully place your seedlings into the containers, so that the top of their current soil (or just above their root ball) is about a .5" under the rim of the container. Carefully fill the rest of the container around the seedling with potting soil and gently press it down to compact it a little. GENTLY. We aren't trying to smash the little guys. Just firmly introduce them to their new surroundings. Be sure to keep about a .25" space between the top of the soil and the rim of the container.



- Once everyone is planted, hang your container in an area where your plants will get appropriate sunlight and can be easily watered. (Hanging these containers on fences works fabulously.)



4. Clean up your potting soil, container cuttings, twine cuttings and dispose of any trash responsibly. Put your measuring tape/ruler, marker, scissors, nail and utility knife away. (HA HA HA Got ya! You should have ALREADY put your utility knife away.)



5. Water your plants. If you made the stacked containers, you will see that water will drain out of the top container and down into the next – this helps with water conservation! Yay!!! Be sure each plant gets enough water to keep the soil moist but not soggy. Depending on your climate, you may need to water your plants a little bit every day or every other day.



Good luck to you! Let me know how you did and send me pictures of your container gardens!

(Bonus for those of you who send me pictures of your gardens and yourselves with UNINJURED fingers because you followed my awesome directions and used those utility knives and scissors carefully.) 😊😊😊