

HOW TO MAKE HOMEMADE SELF-WATERING CONTAINERS - II

(adapted from <http://www.josho.com/gardening.htm>)

Here's how to make a "self-watering container" in about 10 minutes, and for about \$15.

MATERIALS (shown below):

*Two (2) 18-gallon (or similar) tote boxes with lids, such as Rubbermaid. Dark colors are preferable.

*One (1) 5" pond basket (plastic planters with perforated sides) or 1 gallon nursery pot or child's sand bucket with many holes drilled to allow the free flow of water).

*One (1) 2-foot length of 1-1/2" plastic pipe, bamboo or tubing (with one end cut at an angle. This helps the water flow freely through the pipe into the water reservoir in the bottom of the finished box.



EQUIPMENT:

- * pencil, pen or black felt-tip marker
- * drill with a 1/4" and 1/2" drill bits and a 1-1/2" bit or utility knife plus a saw (handsaw will work, but a jigsaw makes it much easier)

STEP 1

Take one of the totes, and mark the HEIGHT of the pond basket all around the outside of the tote (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



STEP 2

Cut along this line around the entire tote; discard the top half.

Figure 2



STEP 3

Turn the bottom portion upside down. Take the pond basket, place it upside-down on top of the bottom portion of the tote, and trace the circle. Cut the circle out, **but cut about a half-inch or more INSIDE the circle** (so that the diameter of this hole is about an inch smaller than the circle). Then, drill or cut a 1-1/2" hole in the corner of the bottom, and drill many small (1/4") holes all over it. This piece is called the "base".
Figure 3.



STEP 4

Take the pond basket and put it right-side up in the bottom of the second tote box (the one that hasn't been used yet). Figure 4:



STEP 5

Take the base, turn it upside-down (drilled side up), and wedge it down into the tote box as far as it will go, positioning the pond basket directly under the big hole. See Figure 6. Because the big hole in the base is smaller in diameter than the top of the pond basket, the pond basket will help support the weight of the base once the soil is on top. And because the pond basket will be filled with soil, it will act as a moisture wick.

Figure 5



STEP 6

Drill a 1/2" hole straight through the outer box AND the base about 1/2" below the level of the base. This is the overflow hole.

Figure 6



STEP 7

Take the 1-1/2" pipe and feed the angled end into the 1-1/2" hole in the base. This is the pipe you will use to add the water.

Figure 7



STEP 8

Cut out the center of the tote lid, leaving just a rim (about 2"), enough to snap back onto the tote. (Note the circular cut in one corner for the pipe.)

Figure 9



Fill the pond basket and the entire remaining box above the base with potting soil and place 2 cups of granular a slow-release fertilizer in a 2" wide strip on top of the soil -- DO NOT MIX IN.

STEP 9

Cut a piece of landscape fabric (or tarp, plastic garden bag, etc.) so that it is at least a couple of inches larger around than the top of the container. Cut a hole in it for the pipe to fit through. When you're ready to plant, cut "X"s in the fabric where the plants will go.

STEP 10

Now just snap the rim onto the container. Add water to the container by pouring it through the tube until water runs out the overflow hole. Add water, as needed, throughout the growing season.



Miscellaneous Notes

- The left-over tops of the totes can be used as instant frost covers.
- Cut out the center of the extra top and drop in a piece of Plexiglas. Remove soil until it is several inches below the rim and, viola, you have an instant cold frame.