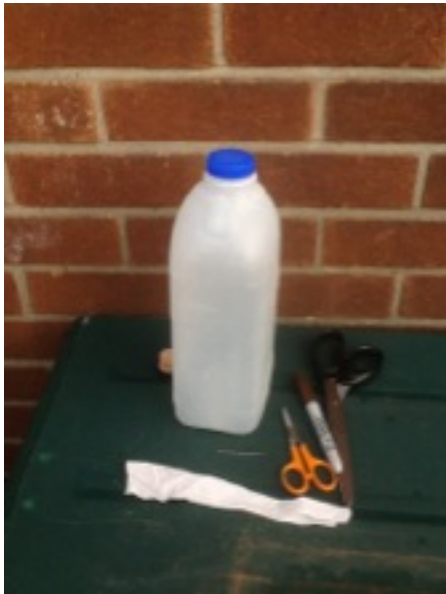




Useful Reusing

- How to make self-watering pots from plastic bottles.

Self-watering pots can be a very useful way to raise seeds and plants. They are particularly helpful if you have quite dry air in a room, or if there is a risk that plants might get forgotten, which makes them really helpful for a busy classroom.



To make a pot, you will need:

A plastic bottle - preferably 2 litres size or more - milk bottles will also work well and may be more stable than a soft-drinks bottle.

A marker pen

A pair of sharp scissors

Strips of cotton cloth or thick, soft cotton string to act as a wick

A bradawl, thin chisel, sharpened screw-driver or thick pin / needle

Potting compost.

How To:

1. Draw a horizontal line around the circumference of the bottle, about 2/3rds of the way up from the base.



2. About 4cm below the line, make 2 or 3 small holes around the bottle with a bradawl or thick darning or tapestry needle.

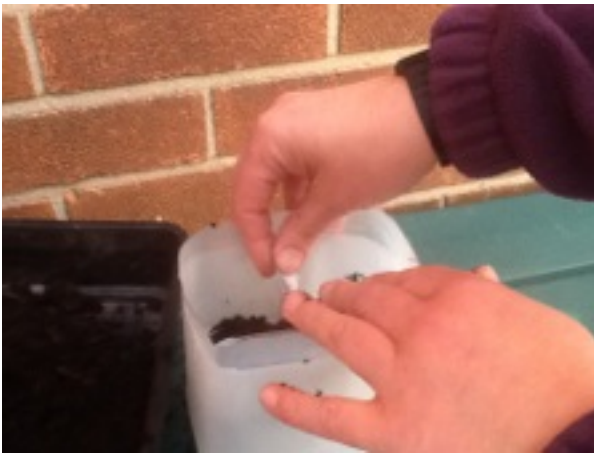
3. Use the scissors to cut around the line. It helps if you fold the side of the bottle slightly to start the cut. You can also use a craft-knife to make the first cut, but this needs to be done with great care and is best done by an adult with a steady hand.





4. Remove the lid of the bottle and place it top-side up on the work surface. Now use the bradawl or other cutting tool to make a hole in the lid big enough to get your wick through. Use the same tool to push a corner of the wick through the gap and then pull it through, rather than making a really large hole. You need to pull through enough wick to nearly reach the level of the cut edge of the bottle. Replace the lid on the bottle top.

5. Now place the cut-off bottle top upside down inside the base, and, holding the wick with one hand, use the other to fill the bottle top with compost up to the rim.



6. Let go of the wick and tap the bottle sharply to settle the compost. This should leave a gap between the top of the compost and the bottle rim. If it doesn't, push the compost down a little, or remove the top centimetre.

7. Plant seeds or a plant in the pot in the usual way, making sure you don't push the wick into the bottom of the bottle.
8. Water the soil until it is damp all the way through, then lift out the bottle top pot, and fill the base of the bottle until the water level will come just below the level of the bottle top when it is replaced. This should be below the level of the small holes in the rim! They are there to stop an airlock forming which could stop the water being taken up properly.



9. Keep an eye on the pot and see how well it works! If using milk-bottles, you could also use the base of another bottle as a "greenhouse" top if it is the translucent type. It will keep your bottles surface from baking if on a hot, south-facing windowsill. If the wick is too thin, it might not provide enough moisture for the pot, so experiment to see what works best and let us know how you get on!