

Garden Upcycling



**Using eggshells, coffee
grounds, and banana peels in
the garden**

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USING EGGHELLS, COFFEE GROUNDS, & BANANA PEELS IN THE GARDEN

In an effort to reduce, reuse, and recycle, many home gardeners look for ways to use common household waste to their advantage.

Let's sort out fact from fiction with three common waste products – eggshells, coffee grounds, and banana peels.

EGGSHELLS

Eggshells are full of protein and calcium and something that most of us have abundantly around the home. Every time you cook morning eggs, make pancakes or bake a cake, you have one or two shells that need to be disposed of. Saving them for use in the garden is a terrific option.

Save the shells by rinsing them with water and placing on the counter to dry. You need many shells to make this a viable option, so find a place that you feel comfortable collecting them until you are ready for the next step. Once you have several shells cleaned and dried, you can begin crushing them by hand to make more room.

After you have several jars of hand crushed shells run them through a blender or food processor to get even smaller pieces and powder. These babies are hard, and they will etch the side of your plastic blender. If that bothers you, just place it in a zip top plastic bag and run over it with a rolling pin several times.

It takes eggshells a long time to break down in the garden, so the best time to add it to the soil is in the fall and winter. During the winter months, distribute your shells over the plot of land where you will plant come springtime. Once the ground warms up, you can till or dig the shells into the soil.

Another way to use them is to incorporate crumbled eggshell directly into the bottoms of your planting holes in the spring.

While calcium is considered a secondary nutrient for plants, your garden will appreciate the added minerals, especially if you grow tomatoes or peppers as these plants are the most easily affected by a calcium deficiency.

Coffee Grounds

We often think of coffee grounds as a great addition to our compost pile and it certainly is, but you can also place coffee grounds straight into the soil and use it as a fertilizer. The thing to keep in mind is while coffee grounds add nitrogen to your finished compost; they will not immediately add nitrogen to your soil.

The benefit of using coffee grounds as a fertilizer is that it adds organic material to the soil, which improves drainage, water retention and aeration in the soil. The used coffee grounds will also help benefit microorganisms that are beneficial to plant growth as well as attract earthworms.

Other uses for coffee grounds:

- As a mulch for plants
- It may help keep slugs and snails away (they don't like caffeine)
- Useful if you have a worm bin for composting
- Fresh coffee grounds can be sprinkled around acid-loving plants like blueberries (but that seems like an expensive addition to me)
- Coffee ground may keep cats and rabbits out of the garden ([do your homework...](#))

Banana Peels

We eat a lot of bananas at our house so I like the idea that all the peels that we would normally compost can be used to benefit the garden. Homemade potassium fertilizer using banana peels is very easy to make.

Potassium is an essential plant nutrient and is important for strong rooting, flowering, and fruit development in your vegetable garden plants. It is considered second only to nitrogen, when it comes to nutrients needed by plants, and is commonly considered the "quality nutrient."

Begin by saving all your peels in a plastic bag that you keep in the freezer. Take off the top stem and add the peels to the bag until you have 15-20 to work with. If you are really efficient, you can cut them into 2-inch pieces before you freeze them (but I never do).

Processing day: Place the 2 inch strips onto dehydrator trays, so they are not touching and dry them at the highest temperature on your machine. When they are crisp, they are finished. I used 145° F on my machine and the processing time was about 6 hours. If you do not have a dehydrator, use your oven on the lowest setting and leave the door ajar.

Ground the dried pieces in a blender or food processor until they are smallish bits and powder. If your processor doesn't get them all into a powder, it will still work.

Using the banana peels:

- Make a fertilizing spray using 1 tablespoon dried banana peels, 1 tablespoon egg shells, and 1 tablespoon Epsom salts. Mix all of this together in your food processor and place it in a 32-ounce spray bottle. Fill with water and shake until the salts are dissolved. This can be sprayed directly on house plants that are out of direct sunlight or used for watering the soil in the garden.
- Add the dried banana peel powder directly to the soil as a side dressing. Be careful not to add it directly to the roots.
- Add a teaspoon of dry peels to the bottom of your planting hole. Be sure to cover it with a bit of soil before adding the plant.

Now you have the tools to take everyday kitchen waste and apply it to your garden soil. With only a little bit of effort, you can dry eggshells for calcium, use coffee grounds for nitrogen, and dry banana peels for potassium. All of these are the trace elements your garden needs to be happy and healthy.

More Gardening Info at PreparednessMama

[Dehydrate banana peels for garden fertilizer](#) (post with pictures)

[How to process egg shells](#) (post with pictures)

[Homemade seed starter pots](#) from recycled materials

[The gardener's arsenal](#) – 10 things to sprinkle, spray, and brew for pest control

[DIY Manure Tea](#) - putting manure to work in your garden

[Kitchen Scrap Composter](#) made from a metal garbage can