

# Try These Useful Repurposing Projects for 5-Gallon Buckets

<https://earth911.com/home-garden/5-gallon-buckets-repurposing-projects/>

By [Earth911](#)

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Do you have some 5-gallon buckets that you're not using? These heavy-duty buckets are ripe for repurposing projects. I'm sharing a few of my favorite ways to repurpose them — as a chicken feeder, a mini vegetable garden, and a worm farm to make great compost for the garden.

Even if you don't have any of these big buckets, you can often find them for free at local bakeries, ice cream shops, and other food-related businesses. They're generally happy for you to take them, especially once you explain what you are planning to do with them.

You're not necessarily restricted to 5-gallon buckets — a smaller size might work for you. But do be sure to use food-safe buckets — this is why I suggest you try to find ones that food-related businesses don't want anymore. You can tell if they're food-safe by the [plastic recycling](#)

**code** stamped on the bottom. Number 2 is best, but numbers 1, 4, and 5 are good second choices.

## 5-Gallon Bucket Chicken Feeder

Do you have **backyard chickens**? This upcycling project may be for you! When I first saw this idea on a local gardening show, I wasn't sure if it would work. I mean, how do chickens know there is food inside? They aren't known to be the smartest creatures on earth, after all. However, I judged too soon — it took my chickens about 60 seconds to get the hang of it.

This feeder is a money-saver! I've saved so much on chicken food, I could have bought a bucket for \$100 and still saved heaps of money. Take a look at this video, which shows how well it works.

This bucket feeder has eliminated my vermin problem — I hadn't realized that they were eating at least half of the chickens' feed each week. The feeder keeps the food off the ground and dry (no moldy food!) and it keeps the chickens entertained (less bickering!).

### What you need:

- 5-gallon bucket with lid
- Drill
- Eye bolt
- Toggle (like a small piece of wood)
- A way to hang it (rope, wire, etc.)

### How to make it:

1. Drill a hole in the bottom of the bucket, slightly smaller than the size of the eye bolt you're going to use. We used a 19 mm eye bolt and drilled a hole approximately 16 mm wide. The idea is that the eye doesn't fall through the hole, but the food does.



**OUTDOOR  
HAPPENS**

The eye bolt attaches the toggle to the bottom of the bucket.  
This is what the chickens peck to release their food.

2. Insert the eye bolt through the hole from the inside of the bucket and attach your toggle of choice at the bottom outside the bucket.
3. Fill your bucket with pellets and hang it up. (Grain didn't work as well for us as pellets. If you feed grain, you may need to play around with bolt and hole sizes to make it work.)
4. Put a few pieces of feed on the toggle to get the chickens used to how the feeder works. As they peck the toggle, the eye bolt moves and a small amount of food falls out.



**OUTDOOR  
HAPPENS**

You can see more photos and details in my blog post about [our 5-gallon chicken feeder](#).

## Vegetable Garden in a 5-Gallon Bucket

Veggies grow surprisingly well in these deep buckets. A major advantage of repurposing the buckets as a [container garden](#) for veggies: It gives you full control of the soil, which is particularly useful if your garden soil is challenging. Our soil contains a lot of clay, which isn't ideal for many vegetables. Carrots, for example, are a nightmare to grow in clay soil.

Because the 5-gallon buckets are deep, you'll have no issues growing carrots or any other deep-rooted vegetable. Potatoes and sweet potatoes are super easy to harvest too — just tip the bucket.

One thing I haven't done yet but am planning to do: It's best to paint white buckets a dark color to protect your plants' roots from light.



## What you need:

- 5-gallon bucket – no lid required. Although, if you'd like to grow vegetables from seed, the lid is helpful as a germination "greenhouse" and for pest protection.
- Drill
- Optional: pipe or hose for an irrigation system
- Drainage material like coconut coir, gravel, or sand

## How to make it:

1. Step one is drainage. Drill a good number of holes in the bottom of the bucket. I did about 10 of them. Don't make them too small or they'll get clogged up too easily.

2. Add a layer of drainage barrier in the bottom. I used coir because I had a block of it lying around. You can use sand, gravel, or rocks, too.
3. Insert the irrigation pipe if you're using it. I like using the pipe because it gets water right down to the roots of the plants, but it's not necessary.
4. To make the irrigation pipe, I used a piece of 2" poly pipe we already had. You can use anything you can drill small holes into — big garden hose, tubing, etc. I've also successfully "threaded" soaker hose through the soil of multiple buckets in a row.
5. Add a cap to the bottom of the pipe to stop water from running straight out the bottom.
6. Drill small holes around the length of the pipe and place it in the center of the bucket.
7. Fill the soil around the pipe and plant your veggies.



## OUTDOOR HAPPENS

Using the irrigation pipe to water the plants.

Most varieties of vegetables can be multi-planted. You can fit, for example, about 15 carrot plants in one 5-gallon bucket. Some plants, like blueberries, are best on their own. I've outlined the 30 best vegetables for bucket growing, along with the quantities you can fit in one bucket, in my article, [\*\*30+ Edible Plants to Grow in a 5-Gallon Bucket.\*\*](#)

Even if you have plenty of space in your garden, these buckets make vegetable gardening so much fun, and they're easy. I've found they're more pest resistant and require less water than veggies in the ground — plus you can take them with you anywhere you go.

## Worm Farm and Composter

One final great idea for repurposing 5-gallon buckets is to use them for compost. If you haven't heard of [vermicomposting](#), it's an easy way to make compost even if you don't have a backyard — letting worms do the work for you. If you'd like to check out how to compost in a bucket, head over to my article, [Worm Farming and Composting in a 5-Gallon Bucket](#).

Thanks so much for reading my article and being on this journey of recycling, repurposing, and creating less waste.

*Feature image courtesy of Elle from [Outdoor Happens](#)*

## About the Author

Elle Meager is the founder of [Outdoor Happens](#), a website dedicated to helping people garden, raise animals, grow their own food, and become more self-sufficient. She is a qualified permaculture teacher and master gardener, and her advice has been featured in places like Bobvila, Mother Earth News, Apartment Therapy, and Realtor.com.

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