

Upcycling: Turning the Old into the New

Is your house full of junk? Don't just throw it all away! Turn that trash into treasure. When you practice upcycling, your old junk becomes art, decorations, or other useful things. Old T-shirts become scarves. Broken toys become interesting pieces of jewelry. Pots, jars, or vases become the junk garden of your dreams.

Upcycling is not just good for reusing old stuff. It's also good for the environment. The more junk you reuse means less junk ends up in landfills. Additionally, upcycled gifts are eco-friendly and creative. Junk gardens have the added bonus of bringing natural elements into your upcycling adventures. When you live a busy life in a big city, nature can seem very far away. A junk garden is a little slice of nature in your own home. Junk gardeners often feel that caring for their plants brings a sense of purpose to their lives. Some even consider junk gardening a form of therapy or healing.

Creating your own junk garden is a piece of cake. It is also cheap, as you're reusing stuff from your own home. You can search the Internet or magazines for decoration ideas, or simply use your imagination. To get

started on your junk garden, find different kinds of containers. They need to be big enough for roots to grow. If you're planting fruits or vegetables, make sure they're food-safe. Remember that your container should have small holes at the bottom for water to drain out. Visit a gardening shop for good-quality soil and seeds. You could even try to search for seeds in a local park.

Next, decorate your containers. Start with some paint, and then look for small things around the house that might make it look nicer. For example, you could use some old lace, or some ribbons. Check out the Creative Reuse Center in Taipei for more materials and ideas too. Once your junk garden is complete, display it proudly in your home. Just don't forget to water it !

Downshifting: a Simpler Way of Living

Is your life all work and no play? Are you missing out on things that really make you happy? If so, a recent trend called downshifting might be able to help. Downshifting is best defined as an escape from the rat race in order to live a simpler, more balanced life. While downshiffters slow down their work pace, they also increase the amount of time they spend on leisure. They learn to spend their time meaningfully without spending money wastefully. Something that goes hand in hand with downshifting is minimalism. This is the idea of being happy with what you have, not what you want.

Downshifting and minimalism have two primary goals: connection and balance. Downshiffters find they have more time to connect with friends and family, entertain in their homes, and share meals. They also find it easier to live a balanced life. They spend more quality time across all areas of their lives, whether it's social life, spirituality, relationships, or others. Many downshiffters find that they have a greater sense of purpose and happiness once they've made these changes.

Changing your lifestyle in this way might seem difficult at first, but

it's actually quite easy. For instance, many people are too busy to cook or enjoy their meals. To downshift, set aside time to visit a traditional market for cheap, fresh ingredients. Chat with the vendors; perhaps they have interesting stories to tell. Create interesting new dishes to try, or stick to cooking your comfort foods. Invite a friend to share your meal. The more meaning you apply to your meals, the more enjoyment you'll get from them.

Simple living can often be achieved by reducing the amount of technology you use. When you hang out with friends, play card or board games together. Keep the TV off and put your cellphones away. Instead of turning on your computer as soon as you get home, ask your family how their days went. These types of interactions not only create stronger bonds with others, but also help you learn more about yourself. Give downshifting some thought, because it might just change your life.