

Cheat Sheet for “End of Year Bucket Cleaning.”

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Tools:

1. One End of season bucket that needs to be cleaned.
2. Worms – you can get them from the old Bucket.
3. Work area
 - a. Sheet of cardboard
 - b. Plastic sheet or opened bag
 - c. Sheet of plywood
4. One dustpan
5. Small shovel
6. Large paintbrush
7. Garden gloves
8. One prepared Bucket
 - a. Holes drilled in the proper location (see Bucket Preparing video.)
 - b. Rim Protector (see Rim Protector video.)
 - c. The window screen is cut to the appropriate size (see cutting window screen video.)
9. Black Bucket for leaves
10. Watering can – leave watering can outside for at least 24 hours to remove chlorine
11. Spray bottle with 5% bleach
 - a. Or a bottle of bleach to splash into Bucket
12. Rubber gloves
13. Paper towels
14. Garden hose

Materials:

1. Newspaper – shredded
2. Bucket Garden Soil – this is a lite weight potting soil; see 'Making Bucket Garden Soil' video.
3. Fertilizer – Organic
4. Water – in the watering can
5. Leaves or grass clippings

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NOTES:

- **All Buckets** used for plants in the Bucket Garden **need drain holes** in line with the handles. There is a video on "Prepping a bucket for Your Bucket Garden."

Directions:

Prepping the new Bucket:

1. **Lay the screen** into the bottom of the Bucket to cover the holes. You can glue it in, but you will need special glue so the screen will stick to the plastic Bucket. (Prepping a Bucket for Your Bucket Garden.) I just lay it in over the holes and allow the weight of the soil to hold it in place.
2. **Rip the newspaper** (or any clean non-colored paper) into shreds and place them on top of the screen—about 3 or 4 inches after you press it down some.
3. Add about 3 to 4 inches of Bucket Garden soil **on top of the newspaper**.
4. **Lift the Bucket** over your head. Without tipping the Bucket, look to ensure the screen is still in place. **All the holes** must have a screen covering them.

Emptying the Bucket

Now that you have your new Bucket ready, we need to **clean the old Bucket**.

1. Spread out your plastic sheet (or large plastic bag or plywood or use an old table.)
2. Remove the mulch from your old Bucket and place it in your black Bucket. Keep the mulch for the new Bucket.
3. Gently empty the old Bucket's soil onto the sheet.
4. Form a few flat pyramids or one long pyramid. About 6 inches high and as wide as needed. Worms do not like the sun.
5. Wait 5 minutes allows the worms to burrow into the soil more, then scrape off (I use either a dustpan or large clean paintbrush) a few inches of soil. The worms don't like the sun's warmth, and they will burrow deeper. (You could use a very bright light.)
6. Keep doing this until you have a ball of worms. Place them into a container with some of the old soil, so they don't dry out and die.

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7. The soil from the old Bucket has a lot of worm castings in it, plus the bacteria, protozoa, nematodes, rotifers, and other micro-organisms, plus fungus and algae that the new Bucket will need, so keep it and reuse it! If you have more old soil than you need, you can either start another bucket or put them in your ground garden or give them away.

Prepping the soil

You can buy a bag of soil or make your own. Making it yourself will cost less, and you will be more involved in your Bucket Garden.

There is a video on making your own lite weight Bucket Garden soil.

If you need only a minimal amount of soil, maybe buying a good organic soil bag works for you. But if you are building your Bucket Garden from scratch, then making your own soil makes the most sense.

If you are using a bag of soil, which type is it?

- **Topsoil** – This is one of the best to use in a Bucket Garden but will need organic material added to it and a handful of sand
- **All-Purpose Potting Soil** – Usually used to supplement existing soil. Check for fertilizer if you will have worms in your soil. Worms don't like commercial fertilizers; they burn the skins of the worms. I have added this to topsoil, and it worked great.
- **Formulated Flower and Garden Soil** is an enriched blend of dirt, peat moss, compost, perlite, or vermiculite. Usually, it has fertilizer added.
- **Lawn Soil** – This is usually used for lawn repair. Some have additives to help with water retention. Often has fertilizer added.
- **A Soil Additive, or Amendment** – is usually ADDED to the soil, but not the main soil for your Bucket Garden.

I suggest that you buy ORGANIC soil. Organic is better for you and your family, as well as the hard-working worms that will provide better fertilizer for your plants.

If you have decided you are not growing anything until the spring, continue to fill the Bucket.

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5. We now have some newspaper in the bottom and have added some soil on top of the newspaper – now we add some organic material. About 3 or 4 inches of leaves; or grass clippings work great also or mix them up. When you use leaves, allow them to dry and then crush them, taking up less space and becoming worm food faster.
6. Add a tiny amount of fertilizer on top of the organic material. As you water the Bucket, the fertilizer will start to dissolve into the soil and be ready for the roots as they move down through the soil.
7. Mix the soil, organic material, and fertilizer.
8. Keep filling your Bucket with layers of soil, organic material and mixing as you fill your Bucket; to about 2 inches below the rim (or edge.)
9. Now a minimal amount of fertilizer to the top of the soil.

If you plan on planting now, then stop and plant. (Watch a video on planting – either a seed, a small plant pot, or a gal plant pot. You can add your worms now or after you transplant your plants.)

10. The last layer will be organic material as a mulch. Mulch keeps the soil from drying out. Do not mix into the soil.

You now can place the Bucket into your Bucket Garden or store it for next year

If you plan to plant later, you can store the Bucket until later. Either leave it on your Bucket Garden run or put a lid on it and store it. Place your Bucket inside a trash bag so it will not leak. Do not have worms in a bucket with a lid; they need to breathe.

Worm Food

Need:

- Shovel
- Banana skin or some organic kitchen scraps.

Directions

- Chop up or blend the food into a smoothie.
 - As it will take a few days for the worms to start eating again, the micro-organisms in the soil will begin to break down the banana skin, and the worms will find it and eat it.

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- Either remove or push the mulch leaves back, exposing the soil.
- With either your hands or a shovel, make a hole in the soil.
- Place your kitchen scraps in the hole.
- Cover with soil.
- Replace the mulch.

Why do we feed the worms?

- Worm castings consist of good bacteria, and their microbial activity is 20 times greater than their digested soil which effectively supports plant growth.
- They aerate the soil, allowing air and water to flow to be more accessible and the roots to travel farther and faster.
- Their castings are water-soluble, so your plants will absorb the nutrients they need to produce more crops.
- Worms eat organic material, so it doesn't go into the landfill.

Cleaning the Bucket

Need:

- Empty dirty Bucket
- Clean Bucket to hold water
- Paper Towels
- Bleach spray
- Bottle of bleach
- Garden hose

Now that you have emptied the old Bucket, you can clean it.

- Remove the Rim Protector.
- Wash the Bucket out. Use the hose to wash it. If you don't have access to a hose, then wet paper towels or an old sponge will do. Either way, we want to take off the bulk of the dirt.

Guys, don't wash your Bucket out in the shower. Your wife might not understand.

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- Once you have most of the dirt off, you will need to sanitize it using bleach water. I use a 1-part bleach to 20-parts water mixture. four teaspoons of bleach to one pint (2 cups) of water

DO NOT MIX BLEACH WITH OTHER HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS.

I usually don't fill my spray bottle up. Once I am done, I will drain and rinse my spray bottle after using it. The salt will kill the trigger part of your spray bottle.

- Spray the inside of the Bucket and **let sit for 5 minutes;** then wipe it clean.

Or you can add water to the bottom of the Bucket and a splash of bleach. Then use a paper towel or old sponge to wipe the Bucket and the rim protector down. The screen can sit in the bottom of the Bucket and soak.

- Sanitize the Rim Protector.
- Sanitize the screen. You could leave it in the bottom of the Bucket for a few minutes.
- Rinse the Bucket, screen, and Rim Protector. You must rinse off the bleach; it will leave salt crystals behind. And salt isn't good for plants or worms.

And you have a clean Bucket to replant or store for next year and a filled Bucket ready to plant or store for next year.