

## How to Make a Self-Watering Planter

### Supplies:

- Plastic bottle – 2-liter bottle, water bottle, etc. (something with a shorter “neck” area – I tried this with an orange juice bottle and the shape didn’t work)
- Scissors or utility knife
- Sandpaper
- Nail
- Hammer
- Wick material: String/yarn or fabric (scrap fabric, t-shirt scrap, holey sock!, etc.)
- Potting mix
- Seeds or small plant – something that likes to be consistently moist (cilantro, parsley, mint, African Violets, spider plant, etc.)
- Water

### Instructions:

1. Clean out your bottle and remove any labels.
2. Find the approximate halfway point up the bottle and mark it all the way around. You want the top portion of the bottle to be able to rest upside-down in the bottom portion without the bottle opening touching the bottom.

TIP: Find a can approximately the height of where you want to cut. Place a marker on top of the can, hold or tape marker in place, and spin the bottle around so you can make a straight line all the way around the bottle!

3. Cut the bottle at your line and sand the edges to make them smooth (this helps with thicker plastic, but doesn't do much for the thin plastic water bottles). The top piece is now your planter and the bottom of the bottle is the water reservoir.

4. Create your wick.

String/yarn: If you are using string/yarn, cut a piece that reaches from the top of the planter piece to the bottom of your reservoir plus an extra inch or so. If it's thin like an embroidery floss cut a couple of pieces, especially if you're using a larger bottle. Kids can braid it to make it more decorative if they'd like!

Fabric: If you are using fabric, cut a square that will reach from the bottom of the reservoir to approximately half-way up the planter section, or find some fabric to re-use, such as a section from an old t-shirt or what I used – a (clean) holey sock! Cut a few strips into one side so it can be spread out inside the planter.

5. Insert your wick.

String/yarn: Take the cap of the bottle and use a nail and hammer to poke a hole through the center. (Do this on a piece of wood or outside so you don't ruin the surface underneath the cap. I did this at our workbench, not the dining room table!) Thread the string through so that it will reach from the top of the planter to the bottom of the reservoir. If the string does not fit snugly, tie a knot on the inside of the cap so it won't fall out. If you're using something thin like embroidery floss, knot all the pieces together to feed through the center or poke multiple holes and thread one through each hole. Screw the cap back on.

TIP: A piece of tape wrapped around the end of the yarn helped get it through the hole easier, but be sure to cut the tape off after it is through the cap.

Fabric: Take the cap off the bottle and push the fabric through the opening. The side with the cut strips should be inside the planter. Make sure it fits snugly. The fabric should reach the bottom of the reservoir and part of the way up the planter.

6. Fill with potting mix. Take your wick and hold it up as you fill in the potting mix around it. Shake the potting mix down so that it settles into the entire planter, especially if you're using fabric. Position your wick so that it coils/spreads throughout the planter.
7. Water the potting mix and wick from the top to evenly moisten it. If you are using string/yarn as the wick, water slowly because the hole with the wick is the only drainage hole for excess water to flow through. If you end up with a puddle of water at the top after a few minutes, carefully pour the excess water out. If you're using the fabric, the excess water will drip into the bottom reservoir through the bottle opening. This is the only time you will need to water from above.
8. Sow your seeds or plant your plant. I planted cilantro seeds in two planters and planted my kitchen scrap carrot top in one.
9. After your self-watering container has had some time to drain any excess water, fill the reservoir with an inch or so of water. Replenish the reservoir as it gets low on water and the wick will take care of watering your plant!