21 Useful Items Good Preppers Never Throw Out—Why?

Preppers already have experience in storing food, clothing, and other important essentials.

However, there are many other resources around the house that can also prove invaluable for survival – things that you can recycle, collect or repurpose into useful tools and bargaining chips. Take a look at our full list and see which you can start collecting today. As a bonus, you'll notice that many of these items have excellent synergy with each other as you continue learning how to reuse everything around you!

Dryer Lint

When it comes to small, throwaway things, nothing is quite so humble as dryer lint, which is why many people throw it away as soon as they take it out of the dryer. However, that lint has an excellent use that we should all know about: It's a perfect tinder filler when starting fires. Grab a bag or other container and start storing your dryer lint. It can compact very tightly, allowing you to collect it for years until you need the perfect tinder material.

Used Tires

Used tires are an excellent garden resource! The wheel itself can be buried or filled with soil to create an easy, weed-free planter. If you lack comfortable resting space, you can use tires to make a quick DIY outdoor seat. If you're feeling creative, tire treads also make an excellent liner for pots, tables, and steps. When in doubt, you can also build a swing for the kids!

Plastic Grocery Bags

A single plastic grocery bag is flimsy and a little annoying – you want to do something with it, but you aren't sure what and it wouldn't last long for any serious task. A hundred plastic grocery bags, however, are an excellent start for insulation materials. It's a cinch to stuff grocery bags in cracks, open spaces between studs, shed walls, and anywhere else where you need some extra warmth. You'll quickly find out that these spots can hold a nearly endless number of scrunched-up grocery bags, which will trap tiny pockets of air and offer effective insulation. Just make sure to keep them away from fireplaces, furnaces, and other sources of heat!

Water or Milk Jugs

Wash these jugs out with a little bleach and use them for storage. They are particularly well suited for storing long-

term foodstuffs and gardening resources. Beans, seeds, rice, grains – they are all perfect fits for these jugs without weighing too much. If you don't like buying sealed water from the store for your personal storage, you can also boil water and refill these jugs with clean water for longer-term resources.

Glass Jars

There are many types of glass jars out there, and not all are worth saving. However, many sturdy jars (especially around mason jar size) can serve important purposes. Use them as makeshift lanterns for outdoor candles. Fill them with soil for a safe, tiny garden that's excellent for nurturing starter plants. Fill them with awkward screws, larger spices or nuts, and other objects that just don't fit anywhere else. And while you can bake muffins or brownies in glass jars, you should be wary about canning with used jars: Unless you can guarantee an airtight seal with a canning lid, the jars become havens for dangerous bacteria.

Wax Materials

We're talking about anything waxy here: Beeswax, crayons, melted candles, and so on. In most cases, you can collect the leftovers, melt them down again, and recreate a candle (wick required) without having to buy a new one – another use for those mid-sized glass jars! You can also do the same with

soap, but don’t combine the more caustic soap pieces with your potential candle pieces.

Cooking Grease

Cooking grease, including baking grease, is far more durable than many realize. This is why you should never pour grease down a drain or into garbage disposal since it will congeal there and clog your pipes. However, if you have a sealable container handy, you can strain out that grease through a cheesecloth or similar strainer (to remove impurities from cooking), and store it for reuse: Once cooled down, cooking grease lasts for a very, very long time, so it’s definitely worth saving.

The big exception here, if you don’t already know it, is cooking grease from cooking fish. Fish oil will become inseparable from the other grease used and…well, it will stink. Permanently. Throw away fish-based cooking grease.

This Timeless Collection of Forgotten Wisdom Will Help You Survive!

Spice and Pill Bottles

Obviously you can use these for your spices and homemade pills, but that’s only the beginning. These bottles are the perfect size for unique little storage kits where you can hold all the materials you need for a survival solution. Put in some fishing line, a few hooks and small weights, maybe a lure or two, and you have a fishing kit ready to go in an emergency. Put in some of that dryer lint and a few matches, and you have a fire kit safe from the rain. Those are just some of the many different kits you can create, which makes it easy to see why many people keep these bottles in their bug-out bags.

Used Shoes

It may not seem like old shows have much use after you are done wearing them, except as a dog chew toy. However, historically shoes have actually been one of the most valuable items in the average house: They are traditionally expensive, hard to make, and worn until they literally fall apart. Without shoes, even basic travel becomes far more difficult and dangerous, making them largely mandatory and in high demand.

That’s why the most thorough preppers set aside a bin or box for used and outgrown shoes: If economic systems collapse, they are one of the best items for bartering, and even old shoes still have a lot of personal value in them when you can’t get new shoes anymore.

Empty Lighters

When a lighter has emptied and no longer produces a stable flame, most people throw them away and get another without a second thought. But even empty lighters can prove surprisingly useful, especially if there’s no chance at getting any lighter fluid. The small sparks that the light produces can still light fires, especially when combined with a sensitive tinder-like lint – it’s a readymade flint sparker that you can keep in your pocket, or store in one of those spice bottles for a fire kit. Like shoes, you may even want to consider storing a collection for trade, just in case.

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Old Motors and Small Engine

We're not talking about vehicle-sized motors, which don't really have much value outside of the car. But small motors, like the kind used for lawnmowers, actually have a lot of applications. Engines from something small like a mower are simpler (and don't usually require complex fuel additives), highly portable, and amenable to…creative reconstruction. In the right conditions you can use them to power a generator, or to create a personal transport device, or to repair other devices that require an engine to function. Have an electric mower instead? Don't worry! The best electric mower models have powerful batteries that can hold a charge for a long time, making them a valuable commodity if electricity becomes a rare resource.

Newspaper

Chances are good that you already have a list of things to do with newspaper, from using it to start fires and clean windows to cutting it up for mulch. But we'd like to suggest a more long-term use for a newspaper that will have you double-checking your stash: Weaving a basket. When the newspaper is rolled into strips, it becomes a surprisingly reliable weaving material that can create all types of baskets and holders.

These are great for storage, disposable trash cans, or simply creating useful items to share or sell – and they aren't quite as attractive to pests as cardboard.

Egg Cartons

If you haven't tried this yet, save your next egg carton and use it as a starter kit for herbs or other plants. Simply fill each egg section with a bit of rich soil, plant your seeds, water lightly, and perch the carton by a window to watch the results. It's the perfect way to start a number of small seeds at the same time. You can also use these cartons as fuel for the fire in a pinch.

Any Type of Binding

We mean rope, twisty-ties, wire, twine, string – anything that you can use for binding. These materials are invaluable for securing objects, building makeshift shelters, creating security perimeters, fixing broken equipment, building weapons, and much more. Never underestimate the usefulness of a simple piece of rope!

What Survival Secret We Lost To History

Tin Cans

Combine a tin can with some curled cardboard a bit of that leftover wax we mentioned above, and you can create your own little mini heater. Of course, tin cans have many other uses, from perimeter alarms to weapons, but we're partial to the mini heater idea since it's easy to create using scrap materials and offers a lot of value. Even if you don't keep many tin cans around, at least try this project out so you know how to do it!

Bread Bags

Remember above, where we talked about how valuable commodity shoes can be when the worst happens? Those of you in rainy areas probably thought: Great, but unless those shoes are waterproof, they aren't going to be very useful where I'm at. Enter the humble bread bag – an ordinary plastic bag, but the perfect size for wrapping up water-sensitive shoes before going out in the rain. This keeps your feet from getting wet (along with the potential health issues it brings) and helps protect vulnerable shoes.

Leftover Lumber

Lumber comes with an important caveat: Leftover pieces of lumber tend to be large and heavy. That means you may have trouble finding a place to store them, or problems taking them with you if you have to leave in a hurry. That's fine! But if you do have space and security, keep those extra pieces of lumber around. They are obviously good for just about any construction project, support system, bulwark, or garden.

Pennies

After the precious metals like gold and silver (which can be difficult to recycle), copper is actually one of the more valuable metals today and offers even more practical value if manufacturing suddenly becomes difficult. Older pennies from

before 1982 in particular are known for their high copper content. Start a collection jar for old pennies so you can stock up!

Chopsticks

Need a little extra kindling? Chopsticks are easy to collect and the ideal larger tinder material, perfect for constructing efficient fires. It’s also useful to have some smaller wood pieces around for minor supports and building or craft projects. If you don’t have room for large lumber, you can still collect chopsticks!

Safety Pins

A trusty jar of safety pins can help you in uncounted survival situations. You can connect blankets together to build a quick shelter or partition, close tears in clothing so that it can better protect you against the elements, and even use them to help close wounds when nothing else is available. The pins can also act as mini-tweezers for delicate work, crafting tools, and so much more.

However, make sure that you keep your safety pins in a well-sealed jar and a safe environment: Moisture may cause the pins to eventually rust and lose their efficacy.

Small Wheels

If you are in a hurry and short on space, it may be difficult to take a cart, wheelbarrow, or scooter with you. However, everyone has room enough for the small wheels that are the key parts of these devices. You can recycle wheels from older carts, toys, and other items you may have around the house. Keep these wheels in your bag along with a few compatible screws, and you will be able to create a cart or platform for transportation as long as you can find a few basic scrap

materials.

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