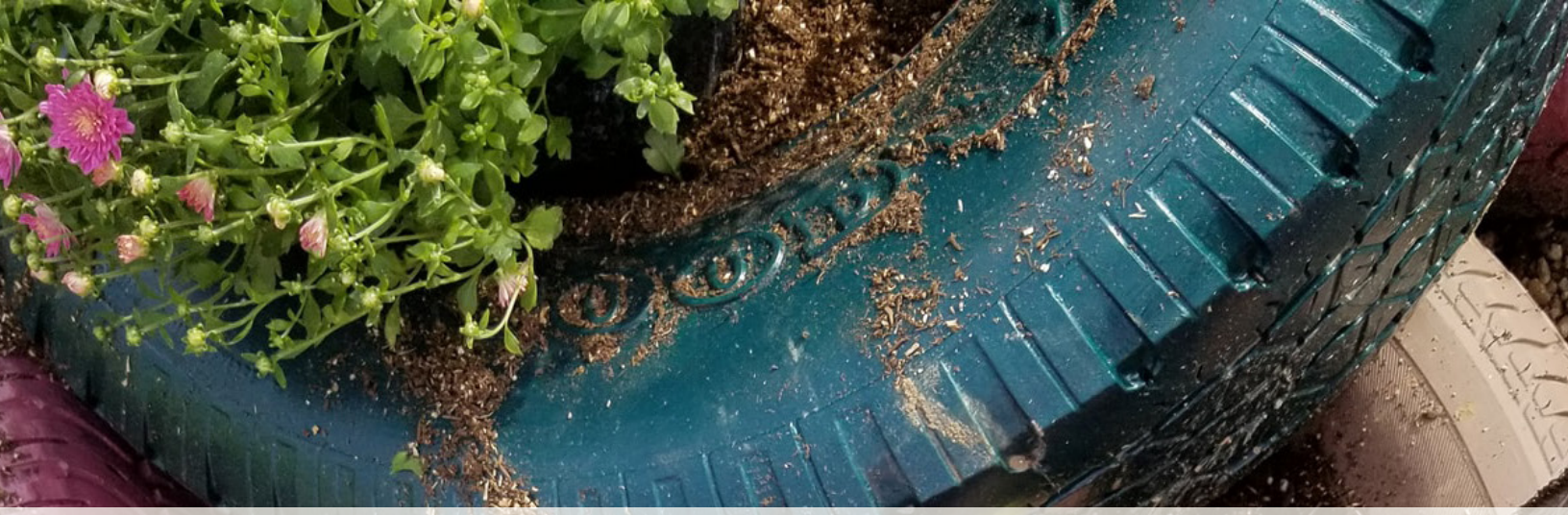

How-To Guide

Tire Planters

Plants are a critical element in making nature accessible for children on a daily basis, and tire planters are an easy way to begin to create places for plantings in children's play spaces. Helping to frame activity settings, indicating how to move through the area, or providing protection for plants from foot traffic, tire planters are an affordable way to add color and plant material throughout an outdoor learning environment.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

ECHO

EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH OUTDOORS

Duration	# of People	Required Effort
1 Hour per Tire	1 - 2 per Tire	Straightforward, minimal

Photo: National Wildlife Federation (NWF)

Photo: Natural Learning Initiative (NLI)

Materials

- ☐ Used tires
- ☐ Dish soap and water
- ☐ Non-toxic spray primer
- ☐ Durable, non-toxic outdoor spray paint (**2 cans per tire**)
- ☐ Landscape fabric
- ☐ Heavy duty staples
- ☐ Potting soil
- ☐ Perennial or annual **non-edible** plants
- ☐ Water
- ☐ (Optional) Non-toxic degreaser
- ☐ (Optional) Fastening hardware: nuts, bolts, and washers
- ☐ (Optional) Drill with bits for pre-drilling bolt holes
- ☐ (Optional) Paint in non-spray form

Photo: NLI

Photo: NLI

Tools

- ☐ Drop cloths/tarps
- ☐ Bucket
- ☐ Scrub brushes
- ☐ Towels
- ☐ Hand trowels
- ☐ Shovels
- ☐ Wheelbarrow
- ☐ Thick work gloves
- ☐ Personal protective equipment - eye and breathing protection
- ☐ Heavey duty stapler
- ☐ Utility knife or scissors
- ☐ (Optional) Paint brushes
- ☐ (Optional) Paint trays

Photo: NLI

Implementation Steps

1. **Gather materials**
   - Check that tires are in reasonably good condition with no exposed metal.

2. **Wash with soap and water**
   - When handling tires, be mindful of wire ends that may be sticking out on inner tire walls. Wear gloves!
   - To remove tough grime, a non-toxic degreaser may be needed.

3. **Prime**
   - Once tires are clean and dry, spray them with a paint primer to further help paint adhere to tires.
   - Allow primer to dry before applying final paint color.

4. **Paint**
   - Spraying is the easiest application. Wear breathing and eye protection when spraying, and only spray in a well ventilated area.
   - A couple of coats of paint will be necessary.

5. **Place in desired location**
   - Once paint is fully dry, place tires where you want them.
   - Desired location should take into consideration the proximity to water, if plants are intended to be watered by hose or carried by hand.
   - Be mindful of the location of the planter in regards to a plant's sun requirements.

6. **Line the bottom of the tire**
   - Cut the landscape fabric 4" wider than the area of the tire and staple to the inside walls of the tire to retain the potting soil.

7. **Fill with potting soil**

8. **Plant**
   - Consider tossing in a handful or two of organic root inoculant or plant transplant food before placing into the tire container.

9. **Water thoroughly!**
   - Newly transplanted plants need plenty of water to recover from the shock of being handled. Water daily until they are established.

Plants to include

- ☐ **Grasses**
- ☐ **Flowering perennials**
- ☐ **Small trees** (In the case of VERY large tires)

  - Edible plants are not recommended to plant in tires due to the increased risk of exposure to toxins leached from the rubber, as well as any potential leftover automobile residue.

Considerations

- **Use light colors of paint**

To mitigate the high temperatures typically associated with black rubber in direct sunlight, paint tires light colors. Light colors reflect light, lowering temperatures to a degree better suited for both children and plants.

- NOTE: Tires do not have to be painted, however it will help to protect them from breaking down over time in the sun.

- **Let children paint the tires**

This is a fun activity to include children, as you build out your outdoor learning environment. Especially for very young children, brushing rather than spraying the paint on is the most age-appropriate method.

- **Double stack tires**

Stack two tires to add height and more room for roots - which will accommodate larger plants. Fasten the inner walls of the two tires together with nuts, bolts, and washers for stability.

- If placing tire planters next to each other, fasten them together by bolting the side walls before filling with soil to keep them in place and provide more stability.

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Cover photo credit:
NWF

Disclaimer

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For more outdoor project ideas, visit:

www.nwf.org/ECHO