



Trashmagination Podcast #38 – Pet Accessories

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown.

According to the Chinese tradition, 2018 is the Year of the Dog. This inspired me to do an episode on creative reuse related to pets, including:

- pet beds, feeding and play structures
- pet leashes, harnesses, clothing and costumes
- pet toys

Pet Beds and Play Structures

Many dog and cat beds can be made from recycled sweaters or blankets. It can be a way to recycle multiple pillows that have gotten too flat for your family. I was impressed how people build feeding structures and pet bed frames from wood pallets, old dresser drawers and recycled suitcases. Some people build pet beds from a recycled piece of furniture such as a side table. Other projects involve building a litter box inside a piece of furniture that has a door for the cat to enter.

- HGTV wooden pallet pet bed - <http://www.hgtv.com/design/make-and-celebrate/handmade/how-to-make-a-wood-pallet-dog-bed>
- Martha Stewart pet travel cushion from recycled towels - <https://www.marthastewart.com/909968/cozy-travel-cushion-pets>

You can build a “cat tent” with a t-shirt. The neck of the t-shirt is the entrance. Inside the cat tent is a structure built from wire hangers and a cardboard box.

Some people build cat playgrounds on their walls. I saw a cat playground made from dresser drawers hanging on the wall like shelves [<http://www.hgtv.com/design/make-and-celebrate/handmade/fun-diy-pet-projects-videos/#video-1>]. By painting the drawers all one color, it added a colorful design element high up in the room.

Pet Leashes, Harnesses, Clothing and Costumes

Many people make dog clothes from human clothes. I saw puppy-sized clothing made from winter hats and baby onesies. You can also purchase dog clothes that has been made from recycled materials:

- REHound in Germany - dog clothing from recycled clothing - <https://www.facebook.com/REhound>
- Sweet Pea and Busy Bee in Australia – harnesses from reclaimed fabrics - <https://www.sweetpeaandbusybee.com.au/about/>

To support a creative reuse artist, check out dog leashes and collars made from recycled climbing ropes [<http://www.dogpatchsf.co/>] and bicycle inner tubes [<https://www.cycledog.com/ourstory-factoryshowroom/>].

I make many items from flexible food packaging and juice pouches. My friend Rupa suggested that I sew doggie raincoats from these items. As I started to research the idea, I encountered an Etsy shop called Recycling Zychal [<https://www.etsy.com/shop/RecyclingZychal>]. The artist makes doggie raincoats from recycled umbrellas!

- Martha Stewart tutorial on sewing doggy coats - <https://www.marthastewart.com/265053/doggy-coats>
- Jenny Lee's Jottings dog raincoat tutorial - <https://jennyleesjottings.wordpress.com/2012/06/12/ready-for-the-rain-diy-dog-raincoat/>

The next topic I researched was pet costumes from recycled materials, but I did not find many great ones. My favorite was a surfer and shark costume. You put a cardboard shark fin on your dog, and you carry a bitten off surfboard made from cardboard. Most pet costumes were not from recycled materials. I'll put it on my research list for next October!

Cat Toys

There are many cat puzzles you can make from recycled materials, where you cut out shapes from a cardboard or plastic box and put items inside. I saw a puzzle made from a 2-liter plastic bottle, where the cat pulls on a little ball covering the lid to release a treat. I saw a "mega cat puzzle" which involved building a round structure from 150 toilet paper rolls. You put treats in random locations throughout the tubes.

A few years ago, a friend gave me catnip which he had grown in his garden. I made a bunch of catnip mice with upholstery samples and shopping bag handles for the tails. Another design for mice toys that doesn't involve sewing is to drill through a wine cork and add a shopping bag handle tail.

I follow an Instagram artist named Nicole Betters who crochets plastic bags and she makes mice for cat toys [https://www.instagram.com/franssim_stuffs/].

Another cat toy essential is a place for cats to scratch. A great idea is to get a carpet remnant from someone who is remodeling or from a flooring store. I saw another scratching post made by stacking cardboard squares.

Dog Toys

The most popular dog toys from recycled material involves braiding t-shirts to make a pull or throw toy [<https://barkpost.com/how-to-make-a-t-shirt-dog-toy/>]. To make the toy strong, I saw examples that use more complex braiding techniques than just a three-ply braid. Some projects incorporate a tennis ball to make a great throw toy.

Many dogs like to play with an old tennis ball. This can be great if you take the ball away from the dog when you are not playing with them. Dogs can compress a tennis ball and it can become a choking hazard. Some dogs can also chew a tennis ball into smaller pieces and swallow them. You should only play with one tennis ball at a time so your dog doesn't try to pick up more than one and push it back into their throat.

Other dog toys involve recycled jeans since denim is such a strong fabric. I saw examples where people sewed denim into bone shapes and you can even purchase squeaker devices to sew into the bones [<https://www.pillarboxblue.com/handmade-dog-toys/>].

Puppy Luv Pet Boutique makes tug toys from recycled fire hoses [<https://www.etsy.com/shop/PuppyLuvPetBoutique>].

Toys for Smaller Pets

For those with smaller pets like hamsters, I saw tutorials that involved cutting shapes into cardboard tubes and then stuffing them with bits of timothy hay or treats [<https://exoticanimalsupplies.com/diy-toilet-paper-roll-toys-small-pets/>]. I also saw many designs for a DIY hamster wheel made from round plastic containers.

Pet Waste

Most people pick up pet waste with plastic bags which is not great for the environment but at least it is better than leaving the poop on the ground. I saw a cool video about an invention in the UK where pet-owners put their waste in a special bin which transforms the waste into electricity. This powers a streetlight.

There is a similar device at a dog park in Cambridge, Massachusetts called the Park Spark [<http://parksparkproject.com/home.html>].

If you don't have one of these amazing inventions in your community, you can also install a waste composter. In the show notes, I'll feature a video that shows how you can build one yourself.

Regarding cat litter, I'll link to an article in Scientific American about which litter options are best for the environment [<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/green-friendly-cat-litter-options/>]. The item that is most creative-reuse minded is Yesterday's News which reuses newsprint.

Hopefully this episode inspired you to make some items for your pets! The project ideas are collected on a Trashmagination Pinterest board [<https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/creative-reuse-projects-for-pets/>]. I would love to hear about items you made for your pets from recycled materials at trashmagination@gmail.com.

Please consider leaving a review of this podcast wherever you listen to podcasts so more folks can find it.

Until next time – may you see trash as a source of pet accessories in your life.