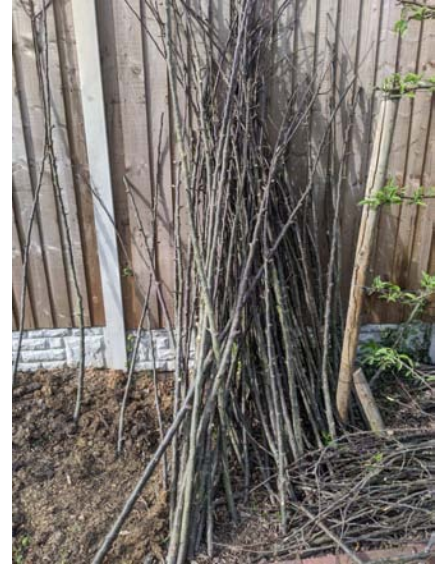


Recycling garden waste during the lockdown

With lockdown in place and many local councils unable to collect green bins, some gardeners may find themselves wondering what they are going to do with their garden waste. Much of the waste can of course be composted, while larger twigs and branches can be used to create a mulch, but this often needs a fairly powerful shredder. Here we suggest a few alternative uses for some of the branches left over from winter pruning, in our case from reshaping a large apple tree.



Sustainable seed markers

For those of us who prefer not to use white plastic markers, one alternative is to create rustic markers using twigs or branches. Once the markers are cut to length with secateurs or loppers the top quarter of the bark is removed from one side with a sharp knife, to create a flat surface to write on. The markers can also be re-used by whittling off a sliver of this wood to create a fresh surface to write on.



Frames and supports for beans and peas

Longer branches can be used to make frames to support tall and climbing plants like beans and peas. Green branches are more flexible than garden canes and can be tied with string or wire into decorative arches.

First the branches are selected for size allowing enough length for some of the branch to be pushed into the ground. It is important to anchor them so that they resist the wind, support the weight of the plant and also to counter the natural spring of the branch that

tends to force them apart at the base. For a simple arch, start by pushing the thicker end into the ground (around 20cm depth should be fine) and then bend the thinner ends towards each other, twisting them together before using string to secure them. Wider frames can include additional vertical branches woven in at the top of the arch. For more inspiration on the design of these frames, online channels like Pinterest can be helpful.



Rustic woven fence panels

While branches are fresh and green they can be woven between posts to create low fences, wind breaks or porous barriers for raised beds. By alternating the weave on either side of the post, the opposing tension of the branches creates a surprisingly strong and rigid structure that locks together the posts into a single panel.



Kindling for winter fires

Smaller twigs and off-cuts can be cut to size and dried to create tied bundles of kindling for wood burning stoves. When properly dried they create a very effective fire starter. One of the great things about using branches in the garden is that eventually everything can be burnt as firewood at the end of it's useful life. This avoids any residual waste going to landfill.