

Salvage Server Project ' Junk IdeasNo.4:

Uses for Useless Computer Hardware #1 – PC Cases

Produced by the Free Range Salvage Server Project, February 2004
email: fraw@gn.apc.org web: <http://www.fraw.org.uk/ssp/>

When old computers get too old what can you do with all that old junk? One of the big problems are the cases of computers and other equipment. They're bulky, and although the steel ones can be sent for recycling, the plastic ones tend to get landfilled, or worse, incinerated. So here's an idea for re-use.



The *Windows-box* planter

Ever seen a rockery made from old PC and monitor boxes? It looks fun. But here is a more productive idea for the space-challenged green-fingered nerd... a *Windows-box*.



Picture taken at Tech2, Lancaster, August '02- courtesy of Saul

Above you can see the plastic body of an old Apple Mac. This is an indoor use, propagating bedding plants. But you could fit brackets to the case and attach it to a window ledge.

Setting up

The best re-use for steel cases is recycling – if you fill them with soil it will create lots of corrosion, which could contaminate the soil. So this options is really only for plastic cases – not just PCs, but other big boxy cases like printers.

Many of the compounds used in computers are toxic. Therefore you have to ensure that any potentially toxic items, like metals, or parts of circuit boards and other electrical components, are removed before use. All you really want is the plastic case with no other contents – other than the screws that fit the case together.

For old clam-shell type cases you are going to have to cut a hole in the top for planting. This is messy, and when you are finished you should clear-out all the saw dust.

Flowers are an obvious thing to grow in these *cyber-containers*. But you can plant shallow rooting vegetables – e.g. lettuce, radish, strawberries, or tomatoes. For more information see Free Range Practice Guide No.5, *Grow Your Own Food* –

<http://www.fraw.org.uk/pubs/frpg/frpg-05.html>

The Salvage Server Project has been developed by the Free Range Network to promote the use of redundant IT equipment as a resource for community and grass roots campaigning organisations. This report has been produced to support the work of the project, and is made freely available to encourage the objectives of the project.

© Copyright 2004, Paul Mobbs/Free Range Network. Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version published by the Free Software Foundation; with Invariant Sections being the document title and author identification, no Front-Cover Texts, and no Back-Cover Texts. A copy of the license is provided at: http://www.fraw.org.uk/_admin/rights.html This document has been wholly produced using the Gnu/Linux operating system and free software.