

WestportNews

Crafts: big art for outdoor living

By JENNIFER FORKER, Associated Press

Updated 8:40 am, Wednesday, July 17, 2013

VIEW: LARGER | HIDE

1 of 2

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶



In this publicity photo provided by Chris H. Olsen, the Landscape Designer, Olsen, of Little Rock, Ark., created a decorative wall out of empty wine bottles by threading them onto metal poles inserted into a wooden frame. Olsen shares outdoor decorating ideas in his book "Chris H. Olsen's Five Seasons" (Leisure Arts, 2011). Photo: Chris H. Olsen, Janet Warlick/Camera Work

Westport News

July 22, 2013

<http://www.westport-news.com/living/article/Crafts-big-art-for-outdoor-living-4669869.php>

W
R
K
S
H
O
P
™

Even a small slice of the big outdoors can call for big art.

With some do-it-yourself ingenuity, creating artwork for an outdoor living space needn't be costly or complicated. In a few summer hours, you can make a piece, large or not-so-large, that packs a visual wallop.

Just keep in mind the advice of [Bob Richter](#), interior designer and cast member of PBS' treasure-hunting series "Market Warriors": "There's a fine line between 'What's that piece of junk in your yard?' and art."

Landscape designer [Chris H. Olsen](#), of Little Rock, Ark., is fond of wine bottles, repurposing empties in myriad ways for the garden — as an artsy wall, accent lighting and art objects.

"I'm all about fun, funky, great displays and projects that are relatively easy to do," says Olsen.

To add patio privacy or garden interest, Olsen builds a wine bottle wall: vertical rows of wine bottles inserted into a wood frame using metal rods.

"I love a little 'bling bling' in the garden, and I love glass," says Olsen.

Another conversation starter: Olsen's "bottle stars" — empty, corked wine bottles that are glued together to create a star shape, then hung in trees and positioned in planted pots. This and other outdoor DIY projects can be found in his book "Chris H. Olsen's Five Seasons" (Leisure Arts, 2011).

David Bromstad, host of "HGTV Star" and host designer of the network's "Color Splash," says stringing a dozen or more wine bottles with lights inside them and hanging them from a pergola or other substantial structure — the underside of a deck, say— creates alluring outdoor lighting.

"The more the better," he says. "If you do a ton of those, you'll have an (art) installation."

Bromstad recommends cutting off the wine bottles' bottoms and stringing the lights through the bottles with outdoor lamp cord. Visit Pinterest, the online projects board, for images of this and other ways to use wine bottles as lighting.

Bromstad is known for creating large pieces bursting with color for his TV show clients. DIYers can do the same for an outdoor space, he says, by using outdoor-safe supplies: pressure-treated plywood instead of canvas, and an outdoor primer and paint. Bromstad uses Nova Color, an acrylic paint that stands up well to the elements.

Distress the plywood before painting to accentuate its roughness, he suggests. Do drip painting — a la [Jackson Pollock](#) — if your artistic skills are limited.

"Everything that has to be outdoors has to last through the elements," Bromstad says, "so you might as well make it look rough from the beginning."

Both Bromstad and Olsen say concrete blocks are useful in the garden: Stack them to build a wall, cement couch, bench or table. Make it artsy by planting the openings with flowers, herbs or other greenery. Again, Pinterest posts scads of images.

"It's just stacking," says Olsen. "You don't even have to mortar it."

One more idea from Bromstad: Hang old gutters from a fence, garage wall or along a pergola's perimeter — just about anywhere, he says — and plant them with impatiens or herbs. Make sure the gutters slope so water can drain.

"It's one big, beautiful art project," says Bromstad. "It's just gorgeous."

Richter roams flea markets for large outdoor art for himself and clients, gravitating toward antique signage and industrial-looking collectibles because they can weather the elements. Surfboards — propped on a deck or attached to a garage wall — are popular right now, he says.

While art is in the eye of the beholder, Richter says care and placement is the key.

"It's like framing a piece of art," he says. "Half of 'art,' I think, is how you display it and where you display it."

Here are directions for one DIY outdoor-art project:

"Bottle Star" (Adapted from the book "Chris H. Olsen's Five Seasons")

Supplies:

9 assorted wine bottles, empty and corked

4 rolls of paper towels (to brace bottles)

Household adhesive sealant

Assembly:

1. Glue the bottoms of four wine bottles together to resemble a plus (+) sign. Let dry for four hours.
2. Where the four bottles meet, glue one additional bottle sitting up. Let dry four hours.
3. Using paper towel rolls to brace them, glue the four remaining bottles leaning upward at a 45-degree angle, allowing each to dry before attaching the next.

Online:

www.bromstad.com

www.chrisholsen.com

www.richterdesign.net