

# 9 Ideas to Repurpose Junk Into Treasure

Tami Shidawara-Vazquez is part of a movement of people who love to repurpose to help keep stuff out of landfills. She's especially interested in furniture and other things made of wood.

When a piece of furniture is damaged, a lot of people put it out on the curb. Tami likes to find things that people are ready to trash, especially if she can get it for free. What some people see as broken, she sees as raw inventory that she can repurpose into something new.



vintage car mirror  
repurposed as a  
decorative shelf

She likes to fix things, paint things, and transform them into something different. She hopes to inspire people to see things past their current state. Here are nine ways she repurposes trash into treasures.

# 1. Repurpose old parts to light up your home

When Tami saw a [Pinterest](#) picture with vintage car mirror repurposed as a little shelf, she knew she wanted to do a similar project.

She started with a cabinet door discarded from a kitchen remodeling project. She has accumulated all different shapes of cabinet doors, but for this project, she chose this thin cabinet door because it was an appropriate frame for a tall candle.

She's always looking for new ways to use cabinet doors. She decided to do a wall sconce. She thought using a car mirror would be a great idea because most people have never seen something like this.



vintage car  
mirror and  
cabinet door  
repurposed into  
candle sconce  
light

People are always remodeling kitchens, so it's easy to find

old cabinet doors. She got a door, painted it and distressed it. It was hard, however, to find a deal on a vintage car mirror, but she finally found one at an estate sale.

“Sometimes it takes a long time to find some things, but if you’re patient, you can find interesting things when you least expect it.” Tami said.

This wall sconce can provide ambient lighting in just about any room.

Tami often responds to [Craigslist](#) posts when people are getting rid of things. Sometimes things are already spoken for when she replies, but sometimes she’s the first person to respond, or they agree to keep her on file and call her later.

In this case, she connected with a contractor. She let him know that she likes to repurpose stuff and she’d be happy to haul away unwanted items such as: leftover wires, fence boards, cabinet doors, drawers, windows and doors.

## **2. Repurpose drawers to create focal points**

Tami loves giving new life to old drawers. During remodeling projects, people typically toss out old drawers because they don’t think there’s any use for them.

“But, the possibilities are endless. You can paint them, stencil them, decoupage and [Mod Podge](#) them to totally customize them to match your decor. You can hang them on a wall, put them under a bed, put your kids art supplies in them on the top of a table, or just about anything else you can think of,” Tami said.



repurpose a  
drawer into a  
practical decor for  
entertaining

Tami often gets drawers from contractors who are remodeling a kitchens. They have to pay to have trash hauled away, so they don't mind at all if she does it for free.



repurpose a drawer into an  
uplifting centerpiece

There are endless combinations you can do with drawers. You can put anything in them and put them in any room of your home. You can put towels in them in the bathroom. In the living room you can use them for drinks, newspapers, or recycled papers. On a craft table, you can use them to store your paint, brushes and paper. You can also utilize space under desks or other underutilized areas.

“Drawers are like a blank canvas. You can do anything with

them,” Tami said.

### 3. Repurpose boards to organize with style

One of Tami’s customers saw a picture on Pinterest of a bathroom towel hook. She loved it and wanted to recreate it. The Pinterest photo linked over to a post that explained how to do the project with suggestions on where to find the supplies, including buying the vintage-like door knobs from [Hobby Lobby](#).

“They offer a good deal on these knobs. People at flea markets often charge more for authentic vintage knobs like this,” Tami said.

With the original inspiration photo, Tami was able to transform some scrap wood and trim into a towel holder for her client who needed to increase towel storage in a small bathroom.



repurpose door  
knobs into  
towel holders

Tami got a board that she cut down to the sizes a bit longer than the door knob plates. Then she got some wood trim and mitered them for the decorative top. She painted the boards

and knob hardware with Annie Sloan white chalk paint. She painted the door plates so that it all blended together. Then she distressed it to make it look old.



repurpose door knobs into  
towel hooks

Tami's customer was so excited. She absolutely loved them. She knew that she wouldn't be able to find these in a store so she was thrilled that Tami was able custom make these for her.

## **4. Repurpose boxes to create more storage in your home**

Tami searches for all sorts of things at estate sales and on Craigslist. She usually starts searching around Wednesday for estate sales coming up, typically on Friday, Saturdays or Sundays. If she finds estate sales that she likes, she signs up for their email updates.

Tami found this interesting crate at an estate sale. She had to flip it upside down to turn it into a table, so she had to take the bottom off and put it on the top. She wanted the Chinese characters to be the right way up. Then she stenciled the "HK" and "SF" letters on the top.



repurpose a  
crate into a side  
table

“Crates provide great storage. They’re one of my favorite finds because you can do so much with them. You can hang them on a wall, put wheels on them, make ottomans out of them, or turn them into tables. If you stack up a pile of them, they make a great backdrop for wedding photos.” Tami said.

Tami did this project on her own just for the fun of it. She ended up selling it at a booth at [Not Too Shabby](#).

## **5. Repurpose vintage pieces into multifunctional works of art**

“I found this piece folded up against a closet door at an estate sale. The vinyl top was ripped. I couldn’t even tell it was a table. I saw the wood and I was curious. I looked at it closer and discovered it was a card table. I loved the potential of the wood. I knew I could make some sort of wall art or a sign out of it so I bought it,” Tami said.



look for ways to repurpose “damaged” pieces

“I removed all the vinyl and sanded it. I went to [Graphics Fairy](#) to look for some royalty-free images. I found one I liked and scaled it. Then I did a chalk transfer and hand painted it. I love French graphics and how the lettering looks really old on this one,” Tami said.



repurpose a vintage card table into multifunctional art

“I liked this project so much that I decided to keep it in my own home. I only recently started keeping pieces for a while. People often see my stuff and think that my whole home is decorated in this style, but it’s not. Most of the things I do sell right away. They never make it into my home. I can’t keep everything.”

“I have “visitation rights” to some of my favorite pieces. I love seeing them when I go back to do other projects at their homes. It’s fun to see how people use pieces in their homes. It’s often different from what I envisioned.”

“I plan on keeping this one for a while. It’s something I can use for shows to display how to repurpose tables. It also shows the sign work I do. It’s a good example of my style.”



“You never know what you’re going to find at a flea market. You can often find rare things at a decent price.” Tami said. She enjoys both buying and selling at [DeAnza Flea Market](#).

Tami occasionally sets up a booth at arts and crafts show such as the [Harvest Festival](#). She loves seeing all the other art and meeting other creative people and seeing the things they’ve come up with.

## 6. Repurpose furniture to add color to your garden

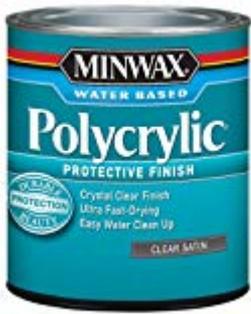
“I have tons of chairs and many of them are broken. But just because they’re broken doesn’t mean you can’t use them. I had so many chairs, I knew I should start doing some thing with them. I was looking for ways to use them around the house or yard,” Tami said.

“I recently painted a red chair and I thought it would be fun to do some chairs in other bright colors. I had a big pot that happened to fit into the frame of this one. The pot rests in the seat frame,” Tami said.



repurpose a chair  
into garden art

This chair was originally a worn brown stain. She painted bright yellow [Annie Sloan](#) chalk paint and then she distressed it. When she does pieces for the outdoors, she tops it off with a coat of [Minwax water-based Polycrylic protective finish](#).



## 7. Repurpose damaged furniture into new storage

When people have a chest of drawers that's broken in some way, most people throw them out.

“But dressers are so fun. You can make a kitchen island out of them. You can put wheels on them and roll them around,” Tami said.

Tami got the idea for this bar upcycle from a picture she saw on Pinterest. She fell in love with the idea of doing a similar project.



repurpose a chest of drawers into a beverage cabinet

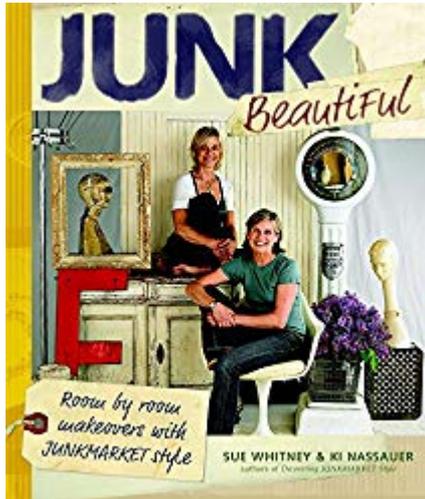
“I started searching for a dresser that I could convert into a bar. I found this one at a [Kuzak's Closet](#) estate sale. I chose this piece because the top drawer had a drop front which made

it ideal for a beverage bar. The railings on the middle drawers were broken so I removed them, gutted it out and made a shelf inside. I cut out a section of the bottom drawer and added chicken wire. I like when you can see inside a drawer. I love adding farmhouse style features,” Tami said.



[click here](#) to learn more about his bar upcycle that Tami purchased from a Kuzak's Closet estate sale

Tami painted the main part with [Annie Sloan](#) white chalk paint and the sides with chalkboard paint. You can keep it fresh by changing the words. This bar upcycle project can easily change moods for different events, seasons and gatherings. By changing a few words and accessories, it easily converts into a cereal bar, coffee bar, or anything else you desire.



## 8. Repurpose small-scale pieces for kids play stations

To create a kid's play station, you can repurpose an old cabinet, nightstand, or any small-scale piece of furniture. Tami used a pegboard to hang the toy tools. She spray painted it with a glossy metallic silver paint to create the illusion of a magnetic board.

You can also use small-scale furniture to make a little kitchen island, an oven, a produce stand, a lemonade stand, or just about anything else to spark a child's imagination.



repurpose a cabinet  
into a workbench

This was a nightstand that Tami converted into a kid's workbench. She saw an idea on [Pinterest](#) and she thought it would be super cute for her kids.

At the time her youngest was around three years old. It was a great place for him to store his play tools. He was able to put his little tool box in the bottom. Her boys love getting involved and helping. They love to watch, sand and paint.

"Sometimes I would have to repaint projects. They thought they were helping, but they were really making more work for me. But after a while, they got really good at it. I wanted to get them involved and allow them to be creative. It's a bonding activity that we can work on together. I love doing projects with my boys."

Now that they've outgrown the toddler tool station, she's going to repurpose it into a kitchen playstation that she'll sell. Things can be repurposed even after they're repurposed.

## 9. Repurpose vintage items to enhance a wedding theme

Suitcases can be used for a lot of different purposes. Some people cut them in half and mount them to a wall for a shelf. You can decoupage them, paint them, or turn them into tables.



repurpose a suitcase into a gift card box for a wedding

Tami turned this vintage suitcase into a gift card box for a wedding with a Paris theme. For weddings, she likes to use suitcases for card boxes. The paper used for this decoupage project was from an antique French hotel directory from early 1900s. All of the letters are in French, so all the pages were vintage to start with. She stenciled "Paris" over the pages to top off the French theme with a stencil she purchased from [Maison de Stencils](#).

After the wedding, this sort of storage box can serve as a wedding souvenir and home decoration for years to come.



repurpose wood  
pieces into a sign

"I have tons of wood around my house so I try to find ways to use them such as for signs or candle holders. I wanted a positive word, so I chose love," Tami said. A sign is also something that can be used for a wedding and easily be used as year-round home decor.



“If something looks like trash, try to find another way to use it and repurpose it, give it a new life, another chance. It’s a shame to see things getting dumped. There are others who would love to get their hands on it and repurpose it,” Tami said.

Once you get a hang of the idea, you begin to see things for their possibilities, and come up with ideas to transform things in unexpected ways.

Tami checks Pinterest every day to get ideas and inspiration on how people are repurposing. She does searches with keywords like: shabby chic, junk, flea market and farmhouse.



If you’re interested in commissioning Tami for a project, contact her at [Restoration Illumination](#).