

TRY  
**THIS** Stylish, functional, simple, environmentally friendly  
projects for your natural home.

Susan Wasinger

# vase paint

## BOTTLE BOOSTER

Wine bottles come in graceful, iconographic shapes, many too beautiful to throw away. Unadorned, they look like someone forgot to take out the recycling, but with a simple graphic paint treatment, the shapes come alive. White matte paint brings out an obsidian sheen in the glass, and ordinary throwaways make a sudden leap to extraordinary treasure.

Look for bottles of varying heights to make a nice composition that gracefully displays dried flowers, stalks of grass, gnarled twigs, seed pods, even feathers..



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Collect glass bottles of interesting shapes and colors. Remove the labels by soaking them for an hour or two in soapy water, then dry the bottles thoroughly inside and out.

Apply simple yet striking patterns to the bottles with **masking tape** and **round paper stickers**. Sprinkle the dot stickers all over the bottle or create alternating bands of light and dark by wrapping tape around the bottle. The areas you cover now will be the areas of exposed glass later. Whether tape or stickers are used, they must be applied firmly with no corners sticking up, which would allow paint to get under them and obscure the pattern.

This bold design was made by wrapping narrow strips of masking tape in random directions around the bottle. Wider tape will not adhere smoothly to the bottle's contours, so use **scissors** to cut the tape in half along its length.

Use **acrylic, tempera**, or **low-VOC wall paint** in a white or cream color. Do not thin the paint. Apply it with a **small brush**, covering the bottle's entire surface. You may need to go over some areas twice to ensure even coverage. Holding the bottle by the top of the neck, begin immediately to remove the tape. Pull the tape off slowly and discard. The tape must be removed before the paint dries, or it will pull off in large sheets and ruin the relief pattern. Have a trash bag handy in which to throw the strips of tape covered in wet paint. **Rubber gloves** are useful for this step. A **craft blade** may help loosen the edges of the tape or stickers to make removal easier. Once all tape is removed, set the bottles on newspaper to dry completely.

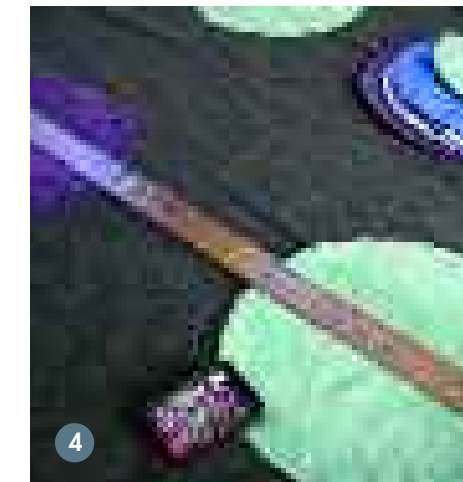
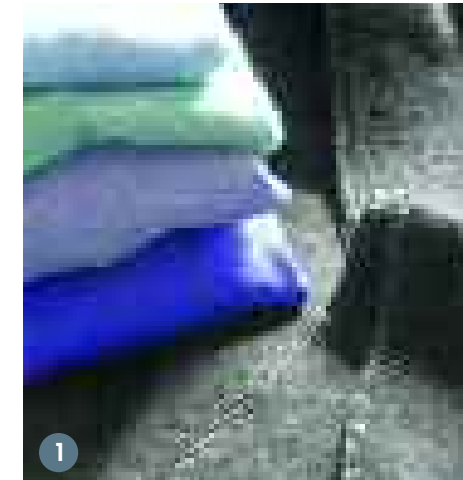


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# trendy spots

Large dots of vibrant wool give this dull gray blanket new life. It doesn't just make the bed, it makes the whole room.

**ON THE DOT** Modern design is seeing big, bold, colorful spots everywhere, so let these hip dots hop across your bed and keep you toasty. This project recycles a vintage wool army blanket and four shabby wool sweaters from the thrift store. All that's required is some washing, some cutting, and a bit of simple sewing. By lining up the dots in orderly rows and choosing colors that are adjacent on the color wheel—here, greens, blues, purples—the dots become less random and more graphic.



**1)** Find **four or five 100 percent wool sweaters**. Thrift stores are often treasure troves of pullover sweaters; these cost about \$2 each. Washing them in hot water and then machine drying shrinks, tightens, and "felts" the wool, making it thicker and virtually fray-free when cut. Choose sweaters that have no acrylic or nylon in them, as synthetic fibers will prevent the wool from felting. Large or extra-large sweaters are best so there's still plenty of material left after they shrink.

**2 & 3)** Trace around a **dinner plate with a pen or colored pencil**. The average sweater will yield four large circles, one each from the front, back, and both sleeves. A cardigan will probably only yield three, a vest two.

**4)** Cut out the circle with **scissors**. You'll need about sixteen circles—four rows of four each—for a queen-size blanket. Lay the blanket out flat. Space the first row of four circles evenly from side to side across the blanket. Measure between the circles. Adjust the position of that first row up or down so the distance between each circle equals the distance from the bottom edge of the blanket. Use that same distance to position the subsequent rows of circles to create a grid of sixteen. The top edge of the blanket can have a greater margin because it's typically turned down when the bed is made. **Pin** the circles in place.

**5)** Use a **needle and thread** to hand-sew the circles onto the blanket. A simple running stitch goes quickly and holds well. Stitch about 1/4-inch from the edge, all the way around the circle.

# Just in Case



This quirky perch is built like the suitcase chair opposite, but it's got fabulous legs. These are actually old balusters from a staircase, but you can use legs from an old table or even use bed posts. (New ones can be purchased at [TableLegs.com](http://TableLegs.com).) Use top plates from the hardware store to attach the legs to the suitcase. For added stability, place 1-by-4-inch boards across the interior of the suitcase at the front and back before attaching the legs.

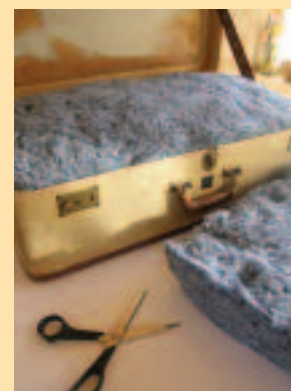
Side straps of patterned webbing keep the back at a comfortable angle. We drilled holes in the suitcase and used barrel nuts to attach the straps.

Both chairs are cushioned with UltraTouch recycled denim insulation, 100 percent cotton fiber that's less toxic than foam ([BondedLogic.com](http://BondedLogic.com)). Using scissors, cut your pieces 2 or 3 inches wider and taller than your case. You'll need 2 or 3 layers for the bottom.

Use heavyweight fabric such as cotton, linen, or hemp for the cushions. Wrap the batts in the fabric as though you were wrapping a present. Then secure with safety pins.

Here's where cutting your batts slightly oversized starts making sense. Squeeze the wrapped cushions into the suitcase so friction, not glue, will keep them in place.

Because it's fighting gravity, the back cushion will benefit from upholstery tacks hammered through the fabric into the case every 6 inches or so.



For the guest bedroom or attic hideaway, this suitcase chair is perfect impromptu seating. Pull it out when you need a place to perch, then fold up the straps and close up the suitcase, and it tucks away in the closet or under a bed.

**SIT ON YOUR SUITCASE** Old suitcases carry back a certain whimsy, charm, and character from their long-ago travels. That makes them hard to throw away, even if they don't cut it for modern air travel. You can recycle your old baggage into innovative and useful seating. Whether they're used as a casual perch or a chair that's there where you need it, these old suitcases are heading off to a new life.

