

Meta Title: How to Upcycle Old Clothes | The Carrot Patch, Dallas TX

Meta Description: Fast fashion fills landfills, but upcycling doesn't have to! See how The Carrot Patch turns old clothes into wearable art, and why your closet can be part of the fix.

Something Old, Something New; Upcycling

By Emma Flowers

Fast Fashion: The Death of Art

For hundreds of years clothing making has been the people's art.

Either with fibers on a loom, or knitting needles by firelight, each piece was hand crafted for the individual. It was often a long laborious process, typically requiring a tailor but frankly, the closets of peasants weren't very big. Given the scarcity, our ancestors quickly learned how to reuse and remake, not even letting a scrap go to waste!

But now, clothing is a commodity. Quickly made and forgotten. Every year you can walk down a Kohl's aisle and see what passes for fashion before it's quickly tossed away for next season's products. The employees simply bag the shirts and send them off.

Corporations aren't the only ones guilty of things. We receive an old novelty shirt that's worn out and we simply throw it away. No big deal until you sit and start to wonder, how many people have done the exact same? And what does any of this have to do with upcycling?

Well, the statistics aren't exactly very kind.

The Landfill Crisis

The earth has become over filled with our garbage. We toss trash in our streets, throw it out of our cars, and don't give it a second thought. I mean, how many of us know about the patch of garbage twice the size of Texas floating around our ocean? The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is still there, but like most problems, it's not near us so we forget, but here's some statistics that you won't.

- Between **80 and 100 billion** new clothing garments are produced globally every year.
- The world produces **92 million** tons of textile waste every year.
- **87%** of the materials and fibers used to make clothing will end up in either incinerators or landfills.
- Only **20%** of textiles are collected for reuse or recycling globally.
- Textile production generates **42 million tons of plastic waste** per year, making the textile industry the second-highest industrial sector after packaging.
- Every time a synthetic garment is washed, it releases tiny plastic microfibers into the water. Up to **500,000 tons** of microfibers end up in the ocean every year.
- Only **1%** of clothes will get recycled into new garments.

Only 1 percent of clothes get upcycled into new garments. 1%! Our ancestors would look upon us in shame!

Surely though, you say, this is the corporation's fault. And while, yes, they are the biggest contributors of waste, it may not be that simple. To put it best, Arabella Ruiz of [TheRoundUp.org](https://theroundup.org), an eco-friendly company that specializes in environmentally safe products states:

“It's easy to blame the fashion industry for the problem of fashion waste. But we, as consumers, must also take our share of responsibility. These statistics show how consumer demand has driven the rise of fast fashion.” -Arabella Ruiz (2026)

And she's not wrong, just look at the information below!



Figure 1. Fashion Industry Waste Consumer Drivers

Source: The Roundup.org, (2026)

What is Upcycling?

Okay, so I just ranted to you about landfills and consumer waste. What now? Well there are a few things you can do. You can focus on clothes with biodegradable fibers, but they can be pricey and often not worth the tag. You need something affordable, something personable. Well, look no further than Upcycling!

“The aptly-titled term upcycling combines the words “upgrade” and “recycling” ... upcycling is a strategic process in which an individual or industry evaluates an item that has seemingly reached the end of its lifespan, then transforms it into something more valuable or appealing to a consumer. It integrates social responsibility with innovation and creativity, and it often promotes sustainability.”

-Rocky Mountain College Of the Arts

In short, it's simply taking old clothing and bringing it anew, and there are hundreds of ways to do it? Want a new prom dress? Dye an old wedding dress pink. Need some cool pants? Cut up an old pair and iron on some patches! There's no need to rush out and pay fifty dollars for a designer tag when you can likely go find some at the goodwill for half the price! The possibilities are as endless as your creativity.

What we do!

At the Carrot Patch, we don't just focus on sustainability, we get the ball rolling!

As a disabled woman, traditional work couldn't suit me. With my health in flux, I found it hard to do more than a few trips to town at a time, but whilst going through the aisles of goodwill, inspiration struck, and the Carrot Patch was born!

For the last five years Carrot Patch has been turning trash to treasure. From belts to boots I customize old clothing, creating pieces such as these:

(Figure 2, the gallery placeholder. Alt text: Before and after jacket thrift)

(Figure 3, the gallery placeholder. Alt Text: Old pants given new life with glitter glue)

And if you like what you see, check out our facebook and instagram at:

Facebook:

Instagram:

And every piece is a piece saved from a dump, and put back into your closet! And the best part? No one else will own another piece like it!

Earth is Calling for our Aid

We only have one planet at the end of the day, and until Texas is once again bigger than the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, The Carrot Patch will nibble away at our local resale stores in Dallas Texas. But this is how we do it. What will you do?

References

Rocky Mountain College of Art. (2025, March 11). Upcycling in Fashion Design: Creating New Looks From Old Garments. Retrieved from <https://www.rmcad.edu/blog/upcycling-in-fashion-design-creating-new-looks-from-old-garments>

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