

## Sawdust and Shavings – what can you do with them?

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After a busy weekend, cleaning out the workshop can leave you with bins full of sawdust and shavings. Here are some ideas on what to do with them:

1. **Compost.** Put them on the compost heap. When they have decomposed, spread them on the garden. The compost heap should be a mixture of sawdust and other garden waste such as leaves, grass cuttings and other green cuttings to allow rapid decomposition. The bacteria that decompose brown materials need additional nitrogen that can be provided by the green material, failing which the addition of LAN will speed up decomposition. The LAN will not be wasted, as it will become chemically available again once the decomposition process is finished.



2. **Mulch.** Mulch is a layer of inert material on top of the soil that suppresses weeds and reduces moisture loss. A layer of mulch can be up to 10cm thick. As it slowly decomposes, it will tend to require additional nitrogen, so the addition of LAN can stop the plants in the bed from becoming nitrogen deficient.

3. **Mushrooms.** As part of a bed for growing mushrooms, with compost and manure, sawdust and shavings, apparently mushrooms will thrive.

4. **Landscaping.** Cover walkways with a layer of shavings to suppress weeds and reduce erosion.

5. **Bonfire.** Keep the cold weather at bay with a fire in a fire basket while you ritually char your meat over a charcoal fire.



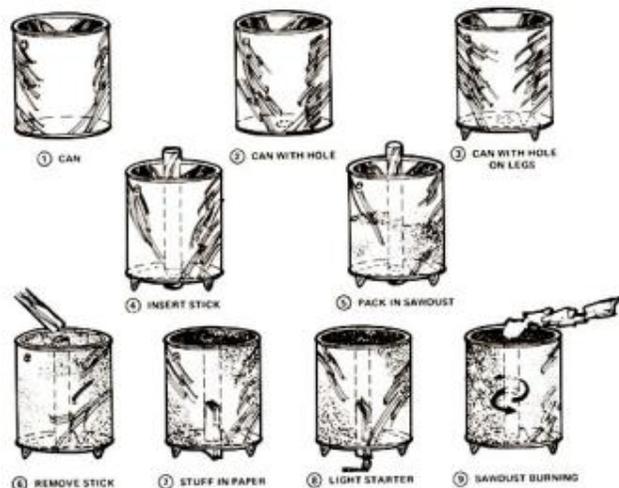
6. **Ceramic raku firings.** Raku pots are clay pots fired in kiln and then covered in an additional source of carbon such as sawdust to impart surface colouring and texture. Apparently, the sawdust creates a reducing atmosphere, which is oxygen poor and this causes chemical changes in the glazes, creating unpredictable effects.

7. **Make a Sawdust Stove.** A metal cylinder packed with dry sawdust, with an open core, that burns from the inside out, will burn for hours with a smokeless flame.

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/Do-It-Yourself/1974-11-01/How-To-Sawdust-Stove.aspx>

8. **Make Fire Bricks.** A mixture of sawdust and biodiesel, packed into bricks for burning in a stove.

[the Fire Brick](#)



9. **Firestarters.** Melted candle wax mixed with sawdust to form a stiff mixture, poured into small egg size moulds, wrapped in paper make effective fire starters.

[Firestarters from Old Candle Wax and Sawdust](#)



10. **Sawdust Toilet.** A dry toilet with a layer of sawdust used to cover after each use to prevent odours. When full, it is emptied out into a composting chamber for decomposition and reuse as fertiliser. The nitrogen in urine assists with the decomposition of the sawdust.

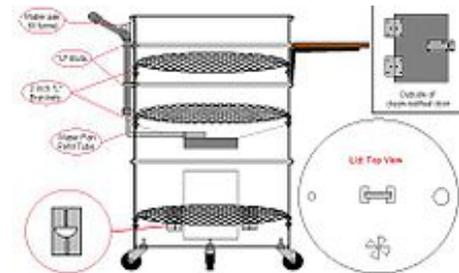
[How to make and use a sawdust toilet](#)



11. **Clean up Spills.** Use sawdust to soak up oil and other liquid spills. Wet sawdust will also capture fine dust, so that it can be swept up without spreading it further.

12. **Make a face pack.** Mix sawdust with therapeutic mud for spreading on your face for a refreshing face-pack. (Then take pictures for publication here...)

13. **Use in a smoker.** Selected woods can be used in a smoker to cure and flavour meat, fish, etc. Ask Roy Gibbs for advice on which species to use. The picture from Wikipedia shows a drum smoker. Avoid species with known toxicity such as Tamboti, Oleander, etc



14. **Bedding for animals.** Woodchips and shavings can be used for bedding for all sorts of animals from Guinea Pigs to horses. Again, avoid species with known toxicity such as Tamboti, Oleander, etc.

15. **Burnishing finishes.** A handful of shavings can be used to burnish spindle turnings spinning on the lathe. Also when applying wax, shavings can be used to burnish the surface to a shine, once the wax has hardened.

16. **As gap filler.** Fine sawdust, mixed with PVA wood glue or epoxy glue, can be used as a gap filler. Alternatively fill the crack with saw dust and drop thin Cyanoacrylate glue into the saw dust.

17. **Make fake snow.** Mix sawdust with white paint and glue it to craft items to simulate snow.

18. **Fuel your Woodgas generator.** Those with memories that go back far enough to the petrol rationing during World War 2 may remember some vehicles converted to run off coal or wood gas. Incomplete combustion in a gasifier produces a hydrocarbon gas that can be used as a fuel in an engine or a stove.

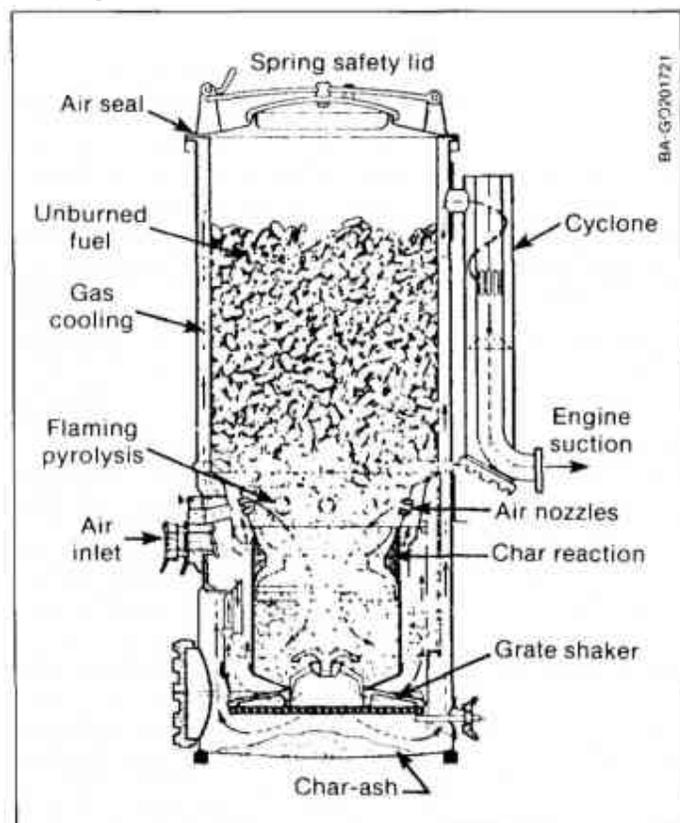


Fig. 5-2. Imbert (nozzle and constricted hearth) gasifier (Source: Gengas 1950, Fig. 75)

(See [www.driveonwood.com](http://www.driveonwood.com) for more.)

**Don't use sawdust from treated timber.** Treated timber with a greenish hue has been treated with CCA (Copper Chromium Arsenic). Blackish treated timber has probably been soaked in Creosote. Dispose of this sawdust safely, and keep it away from people, animals or the food chain. Don't burn it either as toxic fumes may be given off. Creosote, being constituted from a variety of hydrocarbons, will eventually decay to its constituent components which are non-toxic. However, the constituents of CCA, specifically chrome and arsenic remain toxic forever. Putting CCA treated sawdust onto your compost heap may stop the composting process.

Credits: <http://www.toolcrib.com/blog/2008/06/28-ways-to-recycle-and-reuse-sawdust-and-woodchips>  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)