

Making Ripples

DIY Candle Recycling

by Amanda Bancroft

Country Wonders of Iowa makes soy wax candles that are sold here in Northwest Arkansas during the War Eagle Mill fall craft fairs. After years of purchasing candles from them, I had quite a collection of mostly empty eight ounce jars with an inch or less of wax under a wick that would no longer burn. What to do with all that good soy wax that burns 30-40% longer than paraffin? Melt it and fill one of the used jars to create a brand-new candle!

To do this, first you'll need a large pot, water, a wick material, used candles, tongs or something to protect your hand from the hot glass, and an old glass jar you intend to fill. Place as many candles as will fit into the bottom of the pot, and fill it with water up to the top of the amount of wax in each jar – don't let the candles float around and clink against each other. Bring the water to a gentle boil and observe the wax, waiting until it's completely liquid. You don't need to keep the water boiling the whole time.

If you find that you have totally different scented candles instead of all candles of the same scent, don't worry! It worked out great for me and I successfully combined the scents of spiced cranberry, crème brulee, chestnut brown sugar, cinnamon Colombian café, fresh brewed coffee, and the outlier of the bunch: mango papaya. The new candle I made smells like autumn and burns well.

After melting the wax, use something to remove the candles from the hot water. I used hot dog tongs, but you could use an oven mitt or any tool that works. Pour the liquid wax into your "new" candle jar, avoiding pouring it onto whatever is holding up your "new" wick. For my wick, I found a thick old thread on the bottom of my craft bin, and used a long rectangular bag clip placed over the lip of the jar to hold the thread in the center, suspended. But you will probably have better luck purchasing new wicks and metal discs that hold them to the bottoms of jars and tea lights, available at craft stores or online.

It took me eight used candles with less than an inch of wax left in most of them to completely fill one of the jars. I am now delighted with my candle, but next time I would purchase a clean-burning wick and use a new metal disc (or recycle an old one, using tweezers to remove the old wick) to hold it dead-center at the bottom of the jar. Old jars can be cleaned and reused or recycled as glass. Recycling candles this way gives me a free candle for every eight candles I purchase, a savings of around seven dollars depending on the company and size of candle.

Amanda Bancroft is a Master Naturalist and volunteers with her husband Ryan for their solar-powered online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.