



Why is this technique helpful?

- Using recycled mattresses to grow plants helps reuse mattresses instead of throwing them away.
- It also makes it easier to grow food in in dry, desert environments.

Illustration: Plants growing on the recycled mattress foam.

Old Mattresses Used to Grow Plants

Could old mattresses be used to grow food in the desert? A group of scientists think they might!

A team from the University of Sheffield are growing plants without soil. They're using old foam mattresses instead!

They've been working with **refugees** in a camp in Jordan. The camp uses a lot of foam mattresses for people's beds. These then get thrown away and end up on the **landfill**.

The scientists have found a way to use these leftover mattresses to grow food. They have grown tomatoes and peppers this way.

They chop up the foam into smaller parts and add **nutrients**, a **seedling** and a bit of water. Then, they watch the plant begin to grow!

This way uses less water than normal soil. This is great for the desert, where there isn't much water.

The refugees and scientists have worked together to do this. Many of the refugees are experienced farmers.

"I learnt a lot from people who are

farmers," Professor Tony Ryan, one of the scientists, said.

The scientists have trained nearly 1000 refugees on this way of growing food.

The team are very excited about what comes next. They want to raise money to pay for seeds, nutrients and training.

It could be used to grow food in refugee camps across the world.

"We are only at the start of what might be possible," Professor Tony Ryan said.

Glossary

refugees People who has been forced to leave their country to escape war, natural disaster or persecution.

landfill A site where waste is buried.

nutrients A substance which has ingredients needed to live and grow.

seedling A very young plant.

Questions

1. Find two types of food grown using foam mattresses.

1. _____

2. _____

2. 'Many of the refugees are experienced farmers.'

Tick the word which is closest in meaning to 'experienced' in this sentence.

☐ beginner

☐ expert

☐ extreme

☐ young

3. Professor Tony Ryan found working with other people helpful.

Find a quote from the story to support this statement.

4. Find one way which growing food in mattresses is **different** from using soil.

5. Which do you think is most likely to happen in the future? Tick one.

☐ Farmers will run out of soil.

☐ Other refugee camps will grow food using leftover mattresses.

☐ Scientists will run out of mattresses.

☐ Refugee camps will stop growing food.

6. Summarise this news story in 15 words or fewer.

