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intro: BERRY PICKER

This berry picker is made out of PVC pipe. Heat is used to shape the plastic. Two "fingers" at the working end do the picking. The berry then falls through the pipe and lands in a plastic bag tied to the other end.

This berry patch belongs to a neighbor. I plan to grow some at my house on rebar trellises, for easier maintenance and harvesting. See my trellis instructable when you are done with this one: <http://www.instructables.com/id/A-REBAR-TRELLIS-for-Home-and-Garden/>

Also, for further PVC working inspiration, see my instructable: <http://www.instructables.com/id/PVC-Its-Great-for-Inventions/>



step 1: Safety

We love plastics for what they do for us, but plastic manufacture and decay tend to pollute the environment and negatively affect our health.

Vinyl Chloride, one of the components of PVC, is carcinogenic. When it is locked up in the polymer, however, it is much safer to be around. In my years of experience working with PVC, I have not noticed any adverse effects on my health from being around it.

Always work in areas with good ventilation. If you do get caught in a cloud of smoke, hold your breath and move to clean air.

When heating PVC with a gas stove or propane torch, try not to let it burn. Smoke from burning PVC is bad. With experience one burns it less and less. Don't panic the first time you do burn some. It scorches, but doesn't immediately burst into flame. Move the material away from the flame and try again. Don't breathe the smoke. Smoke avoidance comes naturally for most people.

While heating PVC over a gas flame, keep the plastic an appropriate distance from the flame. Avoid scorching the surface before the inside can warm up. It takes time for heat to travel to the center of the material being heated.

Keep the plastic moving, and keep an eye on the state of the plastic. When heated, the PVC material is flexible, like leather. Beyond this stage, you risk scorching it.

A word from James, the plastic engineer -- "Just a word of warning, PVC can handle some high heats but if it catches fire, you won't be able to put it out, it does not need oxygen to burn so don't do this inside".

I do work inside, but my house is made of cement and has good ventilation. MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE GOOD VENTILATION. IF YOU PLAY WITH FIRE, DO SO CAREFULLY.



step 2: The First Cut

I used 1 1/4 inch PVC for this berry picker. A smaller version, using 1 inch pipe turned out to be too small for the berries I was after, but might be good for smaller berries.

The first cut is made at quite a sharp angle. This gives you plenty of material to cut the two "fingers" out of.

Use a pencil to sketch out the cuts you are going to make.



step 3: Cut out the Pattern

This pipe was thin-walled and easy to cut with snips. I cut a center line with the saw, and did the rest with snips.



step 4: Smoothing the Edges

Sometimes a file does the job, but one of my favorite tools for smoothing edges is this scraper made from a broken knife blade.

Notice the PVC handle on the scraper. It was heated and then just squeezed over the knife fragment to hold it firmly.



step 5: Heat and Form the "Fingers"

Heat the end carefully over the stove to soften it. Keep it moving and at an adequate distance from the flame to keep the plastic from burning.

Bend the fingers into the hook shape by pressing them against something, such as a wall. You can always do touch-up heating with a propane torch to modify the shape.

Make sure the slot between the two fingers is open enough to accommodate the berry stem. If it is not, you may have to open it up more with a saw, or file.



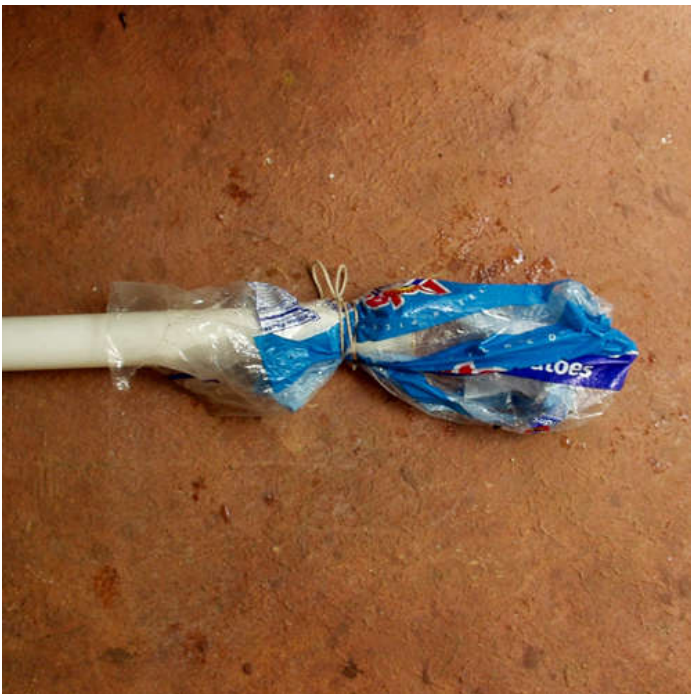
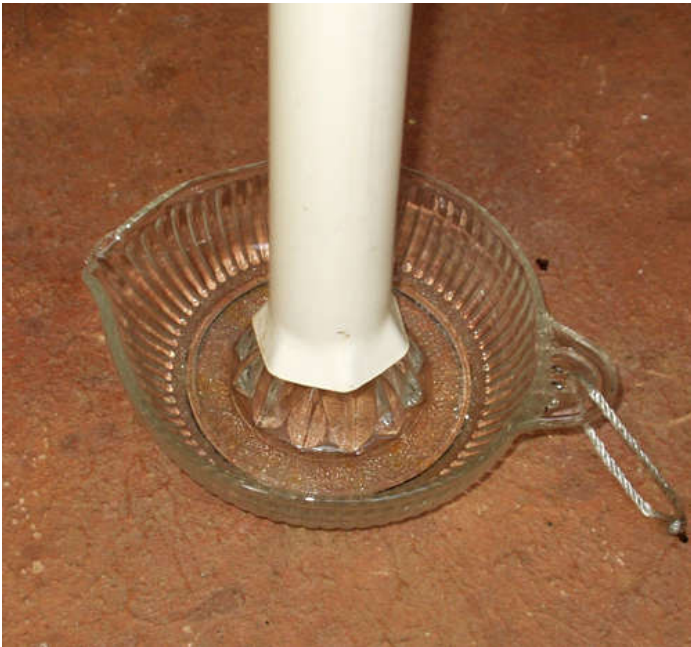
step 6: The Bottom End

The bottom end of the berry picker is flared out so that a bag tied to the end will not slip off. The berries travel down through the pipe and collect in the bag.

You could use something conical, or rounded to make the flared end, but I thought it would be appropriate for the project to be flared over a glass hand juicer. It gave the end an interesting hexagonal shape.

I tied the plastic bag on with a piece of string.

The final step is to go pick some berries!



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