

"Lasagna Gardening" by Patricia Lanza

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What exactly is a lasagna garden? I'm sure you can guess, but it's an easy, no dig, no till and little-to no weed garden.

It is a non-traditional organic, soil-building, layered garden method.

The benefits are:

- Creates a healthy, organic, better quality soil.
- Plants grow lush and healthy.
- No need to dig up and remove existing weeds or grass.
- It saves time, energy and is simple to install.
- Power tools or heavy equipment are not necessary.
- It's easy to assemble & plant in one day.
- Recycling organic material keeps it out of the landfills.
- Best of all it is an organic, chemical free garden.

1. PREPARATION

Assemble your ingredients a few weeks ahead.

Refer to the diagram:

A few bales of peat moss & compost, newspapers, cardboard, barn litter, animal manures, grass clippings, compost, kitchen scraps, garden trimmings, wood ashes, bonemeal.* The exact layers depend on what you have readily available.

2. DESIGN

Assess your garden site. Consider: sun, shade, water, wind, deciduous trees, slope, etc.

Prepare a plan on paper. Consider: the above cultural requirements and mature plant sizes.

By matching the plants to your site, it'll yield the best success with less trouble from pests and diseases.

Measure the length, width, & depth of your garden for your needed organic layers. You can do a simple calculation by multiplying those 3 numbers to give you an approximate idea for the volume of peat moss & compost you will need.

Add up the amount of peat moss for each layer and multiply by how many layers needed. To simplify-using 3 inches of peat per layer, times 4 layers is 12" or 1 foot.

For example:

10'Lx 10'Wx1'D=100 cubic feet needed of peat moss.

Use a hose to outline the shape of the garden.

Lay out the plants, and refer to your design to confirm before planting.

3. BUILD YOUR GARDEN

Refer to the layers diagram.

Lay down newspapers and cardboard, overlap edges, water it thoroughly.

Apply a 2 to 3 inch layer of peat moss, followed by an 4-8 inches of an organic layer. Alternate with the next layer of peat moss, and the next layer of organic material, and so on.

Build to a height of 18-24".

Top with a sprinkle of organic supplements such as: wood ashes, bonemeal*, lime or sulphur. This will provide a balanced pH, and extra phosphorus and potassium.

4. PLANTING

Simply dig a planting hole, separating the layers and insert your plant. By planting closely, yet respecting its mature size, it will be virtually weed-free.

Also, choose cultivars that are disease resistant. You may want to also try companion planting to keep pests away.

Top off with an organic mulch.

For fall gardens, use up readily available material such as chopped leaves. The author uses four times the amount of leaves, as other organic material. But use whatever is plentiful.

Cover with black plastic and anchor corners with rocks or bricks.

You may choose to "cook" the bed, and allow it to compost down over the winter; reducing it to approximately 6 inches in height.

In the spring, easily pop in your plants.

You will find a generous amount of earthworms and the unseen critters that are working together to make the garden bed a symbiotic, micro biome.

We have planted five lasagna gardens, directly planted in one day. All have been very successful.

The first was a lilac border. Followed by a spring bed of peonies, irises, day lilies and a ground cover. Remember to plant at the correct depth - especially for peonies. Keep the eyes just a few inches below the top surface layer.

This technique can be adapted to any kind of planting: perennials, shrubs, trees, vegetables, fruits, herbs, ground covers, etc.

Happy planting!

Jeanne Nevard

* Bone meal is a slaughterhouse by-product. For an animal-free alternative, use rock phosphate.