

# **Lasagna Gardening: The Organic Way**



Several years ago I heard the term Lasagna Gardening. From what I was told, it was a method of gardening that would benefit the garden soil and practiced organic methods. The biggest plus to Lasagna Gardening was that it was a no dig gardening method. Being into experimental gardening I had to find out more about this gardening technique.

The no dig method would work better for me because my soil is abundant clay and rock. I have to add a lot of organic matter to get it workable and remove truckloads of rock. Also it was hard for me to find someone to dig and plow my gardens. Yes) unbelievable for a person who lives in the country but it's true.

There is a book that has been published called Lasagna Gardening that is the best by far on the gardening method. I bought a copy and read up on all the tips and ideas.

This method is called lasagna gardening for two reasons.

- One you layer different kinds of organic matter in the garden area and plant in the raised beds.
- The other reason is the name of the lady who created this method was Lanza

Lanza was a military wife who had seven children. They moved because of the service every three years. Gardens improve with proper care every year so *it* was like going back to base one in gardening time and time again.

Lanza used knowledge gained from helping her grandmother garden in the mountains of Tennessee to help her start a new garden wherever they moved. Tennessee had soil a lot like the area I live in and the soil took work to get it into proper garden shape.

When Lanza went to work and had less time to work in the gardens she began looking for an easier way to garden without all the digging, hoeing and weeding.

Lasagna gardening uses the principles of gathering the organic "lasagna" ingredients used to create layers: newspaper, cardboard, peat moss, animal manures, shredded leaves, grass clippings, vegetable peelings, stalks, coffee grounds, spoiled hay, compost, straw or barn litter.

To make a Lasagna garden outline the area you want to have a garden and put down the layers of ingredients you've assembled. The first layer you need something heavy to smother the existing grass and weeds.

Use thick overlapping pads of wet newspaper and cardboard. Next add 3 inches of peat moss followed by 4 to 8 inches of organic mulch material, another layer of peat moss, another of organic mulch until beds are 18 to 24 inches high.

Wet each layer after putting it down. Wetting the layers helps them to start to cook and break down. You can "cook" your lasagna garden by leaving it to heat up and decompose

for six weeks. Cover the bed with black plastic and weigh down the edges with bricks. I usually let my new garden cook and break down.

You can also make a lasagna garden from scratch and plant it in the same day. This is good if you are putting in a new garden or want to change the location of your old garden. To plant a quick garden simply pull layers apart, set the plant in the hole, pull mulch back around the roots and water it thoroughly. I prefer to use plants in a fresh lasagna garden but you can also start seeds.

To sow seeds in a newly built garden, spread fine compost or damp peat moss where the seeds are to go. Set the seeds in place and cover with more compost or peat and press down. When the plants have two true leaves pull some of the mulch material around it to keep the soil moist and weed-free.

The advantages of lasagna gardens are less digging, less weeding and improving the soil at the same time you are planting your garden. Lasagna gardens are full of earthworms because it's basically a compost pile you plant in. And earthworms are great for your soil.

I have used the Lasagna Gardening method for years and think it's the way to garden. I often combine it with Square foot gardening methods to save on space, water and work. As much as I like gardening, I also like my free time, so easy gardening is a plus!

In this gardening tips article, you are going to learn the complete steps of one simple and flexible organic gardening method called "lasagna gardening". You will be free from the fuss of tilling, sod removal and digging with lasagna gardening.

Lasagna gardening is being welcomed in most households all over the world due to its flexibility. The layering method used in this type of gardening helps to provide plants with ample nutrients and will miraculously boost the productivity of your garden.

Without further ado, let Garden Stuff show you how to create your own lasagna garden in no time!

---

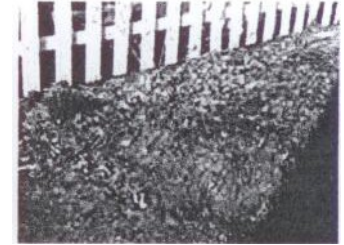
# Abitd.Caln. Organic Gardening

## Lasagna Gardening

No-Till, No-Dig Gardening

By Colleen Vanderlinden, About.com Guide

Lasagna gardening is a no-dig, no-till organic gardening method that results in rich, fluffy soil with very little work from the gardener. The name "lasagna gardening" has nothing to do with what you'll be growing in this garden. It refers to the method of building the garden, which is, essentially, adding layers of organic materials that will "cook down" over time, resulting in rich, fluffy soil that will help your plants thrive. Also known as "sheet composting," lasagna gardening is great for the environment, because you're using your yard and kitchen waste and essentially composting it in place to make a new garden.



Finished lasagna garden, ready to plant.

Colleen Vanderlinden

### No Digging Required

One of the best things about lasagna gardening is how easy it is. You don't have to remove existing sod and weeds. You don't have to double dig. In fact, you don't have to work the soil at all. The first layer of your lasagna garden consists of either brown corrugated cardboard or three layers of newspaper laid directly on top of the grass or weeds in the area you've selected for your garden. Wet this layer down to keep everything in place and start the decomposition process. The grass or weeds will break down fairly quickly because they will be smothered by the newspaper or cardboard, as well as by the materials you're going to layer on top of them. This layer also provides a dark, moist area to attract earthworms that will loosen up the soil as they tunnel through it.

### Ingredients For A Lasagna Garden

Anything you'd put in a compost pile, you can put into a lasagna garden. The materials you put into the garden will break down, providing nutrient-rich, crumbly soil in which to plant. The following materials are all perfect for lasagna gardens:

- Grass Clippings
- Leaves
- Fruit and Vegetable Scraps
- Coffee Grounds
- Tea leaves and tea bags
- Weeds (if they haven't gone to seed)
- Manure
- Compost
- Seaweed
- Shredded newspaper or junk mail
- Pine needles
- Spent blooms, trimmings from the garden
- Peat moss

Just as with an edible lasagna, there is some importance to the methods you use to build your lasagna garden. You'll want to alternate layers of "browns" such as fall leaves, shredded newspaper, peat, and pine needles with layers of "greens" such as vegetable scraps, garden trimmings, and grass clippings. In general,

you want your "brown" layers to be about twice as deep as your "green" layers, but there's no need to get finicky about this. Just layer browns and greens, and a lasagna garden will result. What you want at the end of your layering process is a two-foot tall layered bed. You'll be amazed at how much this will shrink down in a few short weeks.

### **When To Make A Lasagna Garden**

You can make a lasagna garden at any time of year. Fall is an optimum time for many gardeners because of the amount of organic materials you can get for free thanks to fallen leaves and general yard waste from cleaning up the rest of the yard and garden. You can let the lasagna garden sit and break down all winter. By spring, it will be ready to plant in with a minimum of effort. Also, fall rains and winter snow will keep the materials in your lasagna garden moist, which will help them break down faster.

If you choose to make a lasagna garden in spring or summer, you will need to consider adding more "soil-like" amendments to the bed, such as peat or topsoil, so that you can plant in the garden right away. If you make the bed in spring, layer as many greens and browns as you can, with layers of finished compost, peat, or topsoil interspersed in them. Finish off the entire bed with three or four inches of finished compost or topsoil, and plant. The bed will settle some over the season as the layers underneath decompose.

### **Planting and Maintaining a Lasagna Garden**

When it's time to plant, just dig down into the bed as you would with any other garden. If you used newspaper as your bottom layer, the shovel will most likely go right through, exposing nice, loose soil underneath. If you used cardboard, you may have to cut a hole in it at each spot where you want to plant something.

To maintain the garden, simply add mulch to the top of the bed in the form of straw, grass clippings, bark mulch, or chopped leaves. Once it's established, you will care for a lasagna garden just as you would any other: weed and water when necessary, and plant to your heart's content.

### **Advantages Of A Lasagna Garden**

While you will be maintaining a lasagna garden the same way you would care for any other garden, you will find that caring for a lasagna garden is less work-intensive. You can expect:

- Few weeds, thanks to the newspaper suppressing them from below and the mulch covering the soil from above.
- Better water retention, due to the fact that compost (which is what you made by layering all of those materials) holds water better than regular garden soil, especially if your native soil is sandy or deficient in organic matter.
- Less need for fertilizer, because you planted your garden in almost pure compost, which is very nutrient-rich.
- Soil that is easy to work: crumbly, loose, and fluffy.

Lasagna gardening is fun, easy, and allows you to make new gardens at a much faster rate than the old double-digging method. Now your only problem will be finding plants to fill all of those new gardens!

*This About.com page has been optimized for print. To view this page in its original form, please visit:*

*<http://organicgardening.about.com/od/startinganorganicgarden/allasagnaarden.htm>*

*©2011 About.com, Inc., a part of The New York Times Company. All rights reserved.*