

# Make a Lasagna Garden

**Overview:** Build a no-dig raised-bed garden that protects the soil ecosystem and gets kids excited about gardening. Using the “lasagna gardening” technique, you layer mulch, kitchen scraps, compost, and other organic matter. There's no need to till because the sod will break down naturally, improving the soil. If you make the bed in fall, it will be ready to plant in spring. If you make it in spring, it will be ready to plant in mid-summer.



## Materials:

- Stakes
- Twine
- Newspaper
- “Green” organic matter such as fresh grass clippings, vegetable scraps, plant trimmings, and coffee grounds
- “Brown” organic matter such as dried leaves, mulch hay, and straw

**Approximate Time to Complete:** 3+ months

**Location:** Outdoor

**Ages:** All ages

**Season:** Spring, Summer, and Fall

## Instructions

1. **Collect “green” and “brown” organic matter.** Fresh grass clippings, vegetable scraps, plant trimmings, and coffee grounds are nitrogen-rich “greens.” Newspapers and dried leaves, as well as mulch hay or straw (must be herbicide- and pesticide-free) are carbon-rich “browns.”
2. **Level existing vegetation.** Mow the area, leaving clippings in place, or cut down tall grass and weeds as low as possible.
3. **Define your beds.** Mark the edges with stakes and twine. Make each bed 2-3’ wide for young children and 3-4’ wide for teens and adults, so they can reach to the middle without stepping into it.
4. **Smother it!** Cover the area with damp newspapers. Take 4-6 sheets, moisten them and lay them on the ground at one end of the bed. Take 4-6 more sheets and place them next to the first, overlapping the edges by 2”, covering the entire bed. This will kill the grass, adding organic matter to the soil as it decomposes.

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5. **Make the lasagna.** Spread 2" thick layers of organic matter on top of the newspapers. Alternate "green" layers with "brown" layers (examples above), moistening each layer with a hose, until the bed is 12" high. (The materials will settle as they break down.)
6. **Let decomposition happen.** Allow the bed to sit for a few months before planting. As the materials break down, the temperature within the bed may rise, just as in a compost pile. After a few months, the bed will be filled with crumbly finished compost and ready to plant.
7. **Plant.** To plant a seedling, pull materials aside to create a hole large enough for the plant's root ball. Set the plant in place, and fill in around it with compost. To sow seeds, sift 2" of compost or soil over the surface of the bed, plant the seeds, and cover them with more compost.
8. **Maintain the beds.** Water as needed to keep the materials moist but not saturated. Drip irrigation and soaker hoses are ideal, but watering by hand is fine, too. Pull any weeds, and add a layer of mulch once the plants are actively growing to help conserve soil moisture.



*Start the bed with a layer of moistened newspapers. Photo courtesy Charlie Nardozi.*



*The original materials have broken down into nutrient-rich compost. This bed is ready for planting. Photo courtesy Charlie Nardozi.*

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