

NO DIG GARDEN (aka Sheet Mulching)

The soil at Abbey Gardens is a sand/gravel based soil with good drainage. The No Dig garden requires no digging or tilling of the existing soil. This allows the grass/weed cover to be eradicated without herbicides and decompose which provides nitrogen to the soil sandy soil. It also does not damage the existing soil structure and organisms that will form the base layer of the garden.

The No Dig approach to creating a garden consists of layers of carbon rich materials (brown material such as: compost, dried leaves, hay, straw, wood shavings) and nitrogen rich materials (green material such as: grass, fresh weed free plant trimmings) over a bottom layer of cardboard or newspaper spread over the grass of the garden area.

Steps to Creating the No Dig Garden (from Toby Hemenway's book *Gaia's Garden*)

Locate and mark out the perimeter of the garden

1. Dig a small trench along the perimeter of the garden area (use the turf pieces to fill in depression or break down and spread over the garden area).
2. Mark off the pathways and seating area.
3. These areas will not need all the 'growing layers' of the garden itself - just the cardboard covered with a thick layer of gravel.

Preparing Garden Base

4. Clear off any rocks, branches or debris from the area marked.
5. Mow the grass as short as possible
6. Level the garden area to remove depressions or hilly areas.
7. Ensure the garden area is well soaked (water for 12- 24 hours to allow water to infiltrate the soil)
8. Using a pitch fork move across the garden area pushing the fork into the soil and move back and forth to open up channels for moisture, root penetration and soil organisms

Layer # 1 - Manure Layer (high nitrogen layer)

Spread a thin layer of nitrogen/green material such a manure, grass and plant clippings (2-4 cm thick)

Layer # 2 - Cardboard/Newspaper

- Soak the cardboard or newspaper to wet thoroughly (newspaper should be several layers thick and not include any glossy, coloured sheets of paper)
- Lay the cardboard/newspaper over the grass in the entire garden area overlapping edges by 10 cm (newspaper should be 1 cm thick - so several layers of paper)

Layer # 3 - Second Thin Nitrogen/Manure Layer

If available add another thin layer of the manure material

Layer # 4 - Bulk Mulch - Straw Layer

Spread a layer of straw and wet down to moisten and hold in place (it should be damp but does not need to be too wet)

Pathways

Cover the pathways with a thick layer of gravel

Layer # 5 - Soil Layer (compost & topsoil)

- Spread the soil layer 8-10 cm thick
- Spray down to moisten soil

Layer # 6 - Top Mulch

Mulch the garden with wood chips

Allow the garden to 'sit' for a couple of weeks before planting

