Gardening Basics

All About Lasagna Gardening

Lasagna gardening, also known as sheet mulching, is a gardening method that does not require tilling or digging. Rather, it turns materials like cardboard, kitchen waste, straw, and newspapers into rich, healthy soil. There are several advantages to lasagna gardening. It saves money when you can use materials you have on hand instead of buying them. You are creating composted soil that provides plants with most of the nutrients they need. Because you have blocked weeds, your garden requires less maintenance. (Caveat: Bermuda grass is stubbornly successful in breaching your blocking layer or sneaking in from the outside.)

How to make a lasagna garden



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The lasagna garden is created in layers, just like the pasta dish!

Step 1:

Lay out the area to be gardened. Using a raised bed border made of wood, stones, or other suitable materials is ideal but not essential. The advantage of using a border is that it helps keep the materials in place.

Step 2:

Cover the bottom of the area. The bottom layer is usually made with pieces of cardboard or layers of several newspaper sheets that are placed to completely cover the area, making sure that the pieces generously overlay one another so all spaces are covered. This creates a barrier against weeds and grass. Before adding compostable materials, wet the layer thoroughly to keep it in place.

Step 3:

Add alternating green and brown layers of compostable materials. Layers should be about 2-inches thick. First layer on top of the paper should be small twigs, branches, and untreated woody material to permit air that aids decomposition. Continue layers until the depth of about 3 feet. As decomposition happens, the depth will shrink by about 50 percent.

<u>Green (nitrogen) materials include:</u>

- Fruit and veggie scraps
- Eggshells
- Tea bags, tea leaves
- Fresh green grass clippings and plant trimmings (grown without pesticides or weed killers)
- Coffee grounds

<u>Brown (carbon) materials</u>:

- Chopped dry leaves, dried grass clippings
- Wood shavings or sawdust
- Nuts and shells
- Untreated coffee paper filters
- Pinecones, pine needles—chopped
- Shredded newspaper and other paper products
- Twigs
- Peanut shells

NEVER add to your layers any fats, meat, bones, dairy products, pet poop, diseased plants, weed seeds, or any materials containing pesticides or herbicides.

Step 4: (optional)

Add a layer of straw or cover with heavy plastic

Step 5:

When the future gardening bed is full, keep it moist – but DO NOT soak – to encourage decomposition.

Step 6:

Wait patiently.

Resources

Darr, Molly, "Lasagna Gardening", Clemson Cooperative Extension, Clemson University, (accessed 5 May 2026), https://hgic.clemson.edu/lasagna-gardening/

Masabni, Joseph and Patrick Lillard, "Composting", Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, (accessed 5 May 2026), https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2010/10/E-278_composting.pdf

Vanno, Sandy, "Lasagna Gardening." Cornell University, Warren County Master Gardeners, Cornell University, (accessed 5 May 2026), http://warren.cce.cornell.edu/gardening-landscape/warren-county-master-gardener-articles/lasagna-gardening

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