

CORE GARDENING

Less water, Less weeds, Less work!



From MIGardener.com:

“It is a method adapted from the people of the sub-Sahara desert region who use Sahara grass in ditches that they then cover with soil and top with nitrogen-rich manure to grow directly in. The soil holds onto water like a sponge for weeks at a time (once charged), the grass breaks down quickly feeding the soil, the nitrogen prevents any nitrogen from being taken from the soil during the breaking down of the grass, and the organic material adds good drainage, porosity, and loamyness.”

<https://migardener.com/different-gardening-methods/>

Easy to set up, retains water, amends soil quickly, doesn't mound soil like hugelkulture, breaks down faster than hugelkulture, loosens soil, increases drainage, and allows for microbes and fungi to colonize the straw and interact with plant roots.

Infrequent or inconsistent watering stresses plants and reduces yields. Frequent or over-watering can lead to increased weeds. When there is less surface-moisture, shallow-rooted weeds smother themselves out. Utilize straw bales under the dirt to create a deeper moisture reservoir which the dirt will wick away as needed. Plants will seek out this deeper moisture and be less stressed in summer heat.

Raised beds made of 2x12 boards provide enough deep soil. Use composted soil for best results. Shouldn't need to disturb the soil so long as a crop rotation method is used.

Let's Dig It!

1. Rot the bails outside over winter. Rotting helps reduce the waxy coated exterior of straw
2. In the spring:
 - a. In existing composted soil, dig a 12" wide trench the length of the bed, about 10" deep.
 - b. In this channel, place a 4" to 5" layer of straw. Charge the straw by repeatedly soaking with water.
 - c. Bury this straw layer with composted soil.
 - d. Top this off with nitrogen-rich manure up to an inch or two below the top of the bed boards.
3. Plant your vegetables using the square-foot method, or high-intensity spacing.



TIPS:

- Use “clean” straw. Ensure it's free of weed or grain seeds to avoid volunteer plants.
- Experiment with plant spacing. Sometimes with the core gardening method you may be able to reduce the recommended spacing of plants.

CORE GARDENING

Less water, Less weeds, Less work!



- Adapted from the people of the sub-Saharan desert region.
- Easy to set up, retains water, amends soil quickly.
- Loosens soil, increases drainage, and allows for microbes and fungi to colonize the straw and interact with plant roots.
- Inconsistent watering stresses plants and reduces yields.
- Frequent or over-watering can lead to increased weeds. Less surface-moisture equates less weeds.
- Creates a deeper moisture reservoir which the dirt will wick away as needed. Less summer heat stress on the plants.
- This process can be done yearly or alternating years.

Let's Dig It!



Rot the straw bales outside over winter. Rotting helps reduce the waxy coated exterior of straw.

TIP: Use "clean" straw. Ensure it's free of weed or grain seeds to avoid volunteer plants.

Do not use hay - it often contains non-organic herbicides/chemicals. Know your source!



In the spring:
Dig a 12" wide by 10" deep trench the length of the bed. In this channel, place a 4" to 5" layer of rotted straw. "Charge" the straw by repeatedly soaking with water until it acts like a full sponge. Bury this straw layer with composted soil. Top this off with nitrogen-rich manure/soil mix up to an inch or two below the top of the bed boards. (Do not overfill)



Plant your vegetables using the square-foot method, or high-intensity spacing. TIP: Experiment with plant spacing. Sometimes with the core gardening method you may be able to reduce the recommended spacing of plants. Also, rotate plant placement yearly to keep the soil healthy.

Inspired by: <https://miegardener.com/different-gardening-methods/>, <https://youtu.be/iTnBlkG7h98>

Presented by [Matthew Stoffel](#) to the Minnesota Airstream Park Garden Club on August 8, 2020.