



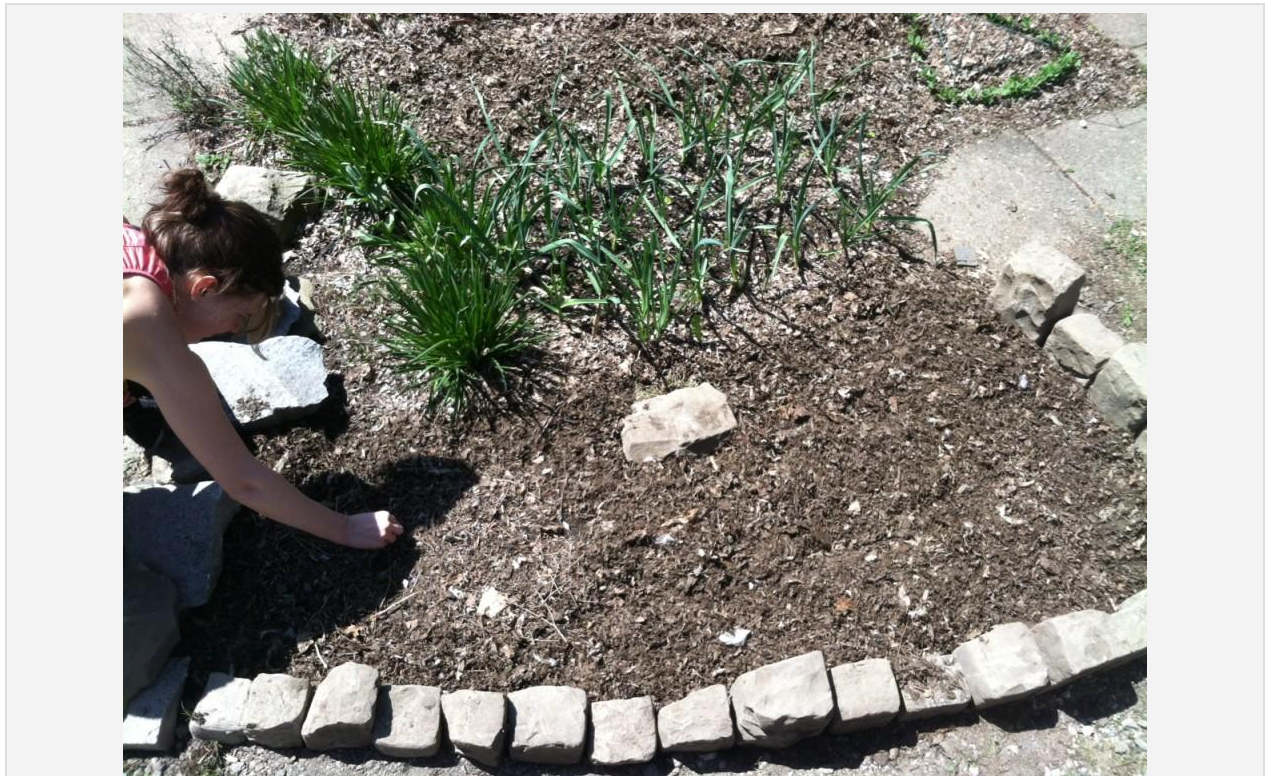
Garden Tips & Techniques: Lasagna Gardening

Lasagna gardening is a tasty-sounding term that simply means creating a garden with layers of organic material. Though the layers are made up of materials like leaves, grass clippings, compost, or manure (rather than cheese, pasta, vegetables, and sauce!) the result is a garden bed with layers of goodness, just like lasagna!

This gardening tactic is a great one to use right now, before the long winter. Organic materials are widely available this time of year (think raked leaves and grass clippings). Layering these types of materials creates an on-site composting situation. By the spring, the organic matter will have begun to break down and the layers will be merging. Any sod underneath the bed will be decomposing as well. It will decay and combine with any soil below and organic matter above.

Creating a built-up bed on top of sod is one of the easiest ways to create a garden where there wasn't one before. Removing sod, turning it in with a shovel, or using a tiller to break through strong roots are also effective, but require much more work! Plus, incorporating the sod into the bed harnesses the nutrients in the grass and its roots and puts them to good use in the garden.

Like many gardening activities, creating a lasagna garden is part art, part science, and part resourcefulness! It's a good idea to alternate layers of "browns" and "greens" like in a [compost pile](#), so the organic matter will break down efficiently. The thickness of the layers can vary widely and still create a successful garden. But in general, shoot for layers that are about 2-3" deep, with a total bed height of at least 10-12". The bed will shrink over the winter as the materials decompose.



The area of this garden that is bordered in rocks is a new lasagna garden!

Common Lasagna Gardening Materials for Layers:

- Cardboard: place as a base layer on the sod
- Leaves: mowed is best, but un-mowed will do
- Grass clippings
- Weeds: without seeds
- Compost: finished or unfinished
- Healthy spent plants pulled from the garden
- Animal manure
- Soil amendments: rock phosphate, lime or Sulfur (depending on pH of soil), greensand, etc.
- Newspaper: shred or make thin layers
- Sawdust: from untreated wood – make very thin layers

When spring rolls around, simply dig into your pile and transplant directly into the holes. If you built a bed with lots of rich layers, the soil you plant into will be dark and loamy and smell like earth. If it stinks, give it a little more time before planting. If there are still lots of leaves or other brown material visible, go ahead and dig a hole and add plenty of finished compost before planting. To direct seed in your new bed, rake off any large materials on top of the bed and add a layer of compost or potting mix to create a fine seedbed.

Lasagna gardening is also versatile. You can create large or small beds, in whatever shape works best for your space. Happy bed building!