Intro to Lasagna Gardening

from Patricia Lanza’s book Lasagna Gardening
What is Lasagna Gardening?

- Lasagna gardening is a nontraditional, organic, layering method used to create better soil while keeping gardens neat and attractive.

- The name comes from the layers used to create beds.

- It is an easy, time-saving way to install and maintain any kind of garden without removing the sod, digging, or tilling.
Who is Lasagna Gardening for?

- It's for busy people who don't have time for traditional garden methods.
- It's for people who are power tool challenged.
- It's for anyone who cannot garden traditionally because of age or physical limitations.
- It's for the new gardener.
- It's for any of us who are stressed and overworked!
Why use Lasagna Gardening?

It saves energy, time, and money.

Once the beds are made all you have to do each year is plant and mulch—no tilling or digging.
Getting Started

It starts with two basic questions:

• What do you want to grow?
• Where will you put your garden?
Select a Site

- Find a spot with eight or more hours of sunlight if possible.
- Find a spot that is well drained, avoiding areas where water puddles or drains poorly.
- Find a spot that is sheltered from strong wind.
Deciding What to Grow is the Easy Part!

Lasagna gardening lends itself well to growing:

- produce
- herbs
- cut flowers
- perennials
- or even a mixture of dwarf conifers and rock-garden plants for close-up viewing
Take a Soil Test

- Take samples from five or six different spots in the area where you plan to put your garden.

- Lasagna gardening gives so much control as to what goes into the soil that deficiencies can be easily corrected.
Ingredients

- animal manures
- compost
- corn cobs (chopped)
- grass clippings
- hay
- leaves

- peat moss
- seaweed/kelp
- sawdust
- stalks (chopped)
- straw
- wood ashes
Recipe for layers

Use 4 parts high-carbon ingredients to 1 part high-nitrogen material

- High carbon = brown, dry materials (leaves, straw, and hay
- High nitrogen = green, moist materials (grass clippings, kitchen waste, and manure)
- Small pieces break down faster—chop up kitchen waste; run leaves, twigs and branches through a chipper.
Buy Additional Lasagna Ingredients if Necessary

- Unless you have an unlimited supply of homegrown mulch materials and compost you’ll probably need to buy some of your lasagna ingredients.

- Sphagnum peat moss is one of the most accessible and inexpensive materials available.

- Other purchased materials useful include bonemeal (adds phosphorus) and bloodmeal (adds nitrogen). Uses these according to the soil test results.
Assembling a Lasagna Garden
Assembly

- Put down several layers of soaking wet newspaper or overlapping cardboard to smother existing grass.
- Add 2-3 inches of peat moss to cover the newspaper or cardboard.
- Spread a 4-8 inch layer of organic mulch over the peat moss.
- Add another layer of peat moss.
- Repeat layering of organic mulch and peat moss until the beds are 18-24” high.
- If desired, top the layers with a scattering of bonemeal and wood ashes to provide extra and potassium.
Planting a Raw Lasagna Garden

You don’t have to wait to plant. You can build and plant the same day.

To plant, pull the layers apart and set plant in the hole. Push the materials back and water.

To sow seeds, spread fine compost or damp peat moss where the seeds are to go, then set the seeds on the surface. Sift more fine material to cover the seeds and press down. When the first pair of true leaves appear, pull some of the coarser material around the plants to keep the soil moist and weed free.
Cooking Your Lasagna Garden

If you have the time, cooking your garden will reduce the height and create loose crumbly soil. Create the right balance of materials to encourage heating.

➤ Use the 4 part brown to one part green ingredients recipe.

➤ Apply the material in 4 to 6 inch layers adding a sprinkling of organic supplements, such as sulphur if needed to adjust the soil’s pH. Add layers of compost also if you have any.

➤ Once the bed is 18 to 24 inches deep, cover with black plastic and weigh down edges. Leave on for about six weeks. Most of the mulch will have broken down into a dark, crumbly material.
Making the Transition from Traditional to Lasagna

To turn an existing vegetable garden into a lasagna garden, tromp down the remaining top growth in fall or late winter, cover it with thick pads of wet newspaper or cardboard and start building up the layers. (This can work with flower gardens too—dig up any perennials before building and replant on top.)
Encourage the Worms

Earthworms are indicators of healthy garden soil. If they are scarce it could mean that your soil is compacted, low in organic matter, or treated with pesticides.

- Add a layer of chopped leaves and grass clippings to encourage earthworm populations.

- Buy earthworms from a mail-order supplier or bait and tackle store. Dump them under the paper layer or between mulch layers.
Finishing Touches

- Add some special touches to express your personal style
- Fences
- Paths
- Garden Art
- Interesting Supports for Vegetables
- Repurposed Items
One Last Thought: Container Lasagna

Instead of mixing a special soil for your container plants: Just lay a few sheets of wet newspaper on the bottom, and fill the pots with alternating 2-inch layers of peat moss and commercial potting mix. Add a layer or two of compost or other materials you have on hand; then you're ready to plant.