



\$0.50

Riverton Organic Growers Fact Sheet | www.sces.org.nz

'NO-DIG' GARDENING

This is a great way to keep your soil really alive and producing wonderful plants.

Soil is a very special ecosystem made up of millions of tiny microorganisms and hundreds of larger creatures. These organisms can be harmed during the process of digging and soil disturbance, so 'no-dig' approaches seek to avoid this. Once established, a no-dig garden requires relatively little ongoing maintenance.

KEY BENEFITS OF NO-DIG METHODS

- Soil organisms can thrive undisturbed
- Soil structure is improved, retaining more water
- There are fewer weeds due to less soil disturbance
- Soil may warm more quickly in spring
- Generally only a regular top-up of compost is needed to keep up fertility
- Easy to put sides on as 'raised beds'
- Can be established nearly anywhere!

A no-dig garden can be set up anywhere - even on concrete (although this isn't really ideal). It is simply a matter of layering soil, compost or other organic materials on the ground over a layer of cardboard or newspaper, then topping up with compost and planting. There are many different ways you could do it, but two common approaches are shown below and (in more detail) over the page.

1. THE SIMPLE METHOD



1. Lay cardboard over the ground; 2. Spread compost on cardboard; 3. Plant!

'NO-DIG' GARDENING

2. THE 'SHEET MULCH' METHOD

YOU WILL NEED:

- Lots of old newspapers or sheets of plain cardboard (appliance boxes are ideal - remove any tape)
- Wooden planks 20cm x 3cm to fit (optional, but help keep things tidy) plus some stakes to hold them up (or they could be nailed together)
- Sawdust or bark chips for paths (also optional, make it easy to get around)
- Sufficient compost materials to cover the area to a depth of at least 30cm: could include grass clippings, straw, animal manure, seaweed, pine needles, shredded prunings etc. (a mix of 'green' and 'brown' material is ideal)
- NOTE: If you use hay or horse manure in your 'sheet mulch' garden you may find a lot of weed seeds growing - make sure you pull these out before they flower. Pulled weeds can usually be left to die on the surface, adding to the soil fertility.

STEPS:

STEP 1 Trample grass and weeds and place cardboard or paper on top;	STEP 2 Place frame on (if using) and stake. Spread sawdust around outside of bed;	STEP 3 Layer up materials: manure / straw / grass clippings / pine needles etc. (alternating 'greens' and 'browns')	STEP 4 Water well and ideally leave for a couple of weeks to settle (but you can plant straight away if you really want to);	STEP 5 When planting, make some holes and fill with compost, then nestle seedlings in. Seeds can be sown in shallow trenches of compost.
---	---	---	--	--

And remember always keep the soil covered – nature does... (and it keeps the weeds down!)

