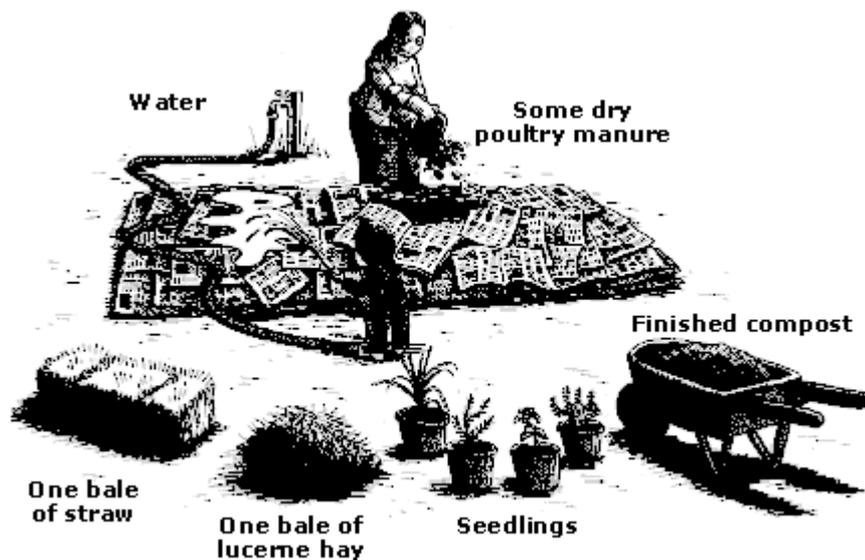


# The No-Dig Garden

This type of garden uses layers of organic materials such as newspaper, compost, straw, Lucerne hay, grass clippings, kitchen scraps and manure above the ground as a bed for plants rather than planting them in the soil. No-dig gardens have several advantages:

- *You can make them on concrete or on poor or compacted soil.*
- *They are easy and quick to set up and require very little maintenance.*
- *They have potential to fully recycle kitchen scraps and garden waste.*
- *They can be built as a garden bed or in containers of any shape or size.*
- *The compost based soil is very rich.*



## How to build a no-dig garden on an existing lawn or onto soil

1. *Choose a site with plenty of sun, drainage and shelter.*
2. *Mark out and form the walls of the garden bed. The walls should be at least 20cm high, and can be higher. Use any materials you have, including old rocks, sleepers, bricks, blocks, pavers etc. You can use hay bales or just mound the bed up without solid sides. You can also build a no dig garden in a large container.*
3. *Slash the grass/weeds to soil level and leave them in place to enrich the soil. Sprinkle with compost, manure or commercial product such as Dynamic Lifter (chicken manure) to activate the soil.*
4. *Line the base with a 3-5mm thickness of soaked newspaper to suppress weeds; and wet thoroughly. If you have a deep enough bed this layer is not necessary. If your garden base is rock or hard clay, put down a 5-7 cm layer of old leaves, small sticks or pieces of seaweed first and then cover with newspaper. You may need to add gypsum to compacted soils.*
5. *Stack alternating layers of fine and coarse compostable materials. For example, start with a layer of pea straw, then a thin layer of cow manure, or blood and bone then a layer of*

# The No Dig Garden

---

compost, and repeat the layers, finishing with a thick compost layer with mulch over the top. You can add layers of green material (high in nitrogen) like grass clippings, comfrey leaves, lemon grass between the dryer materials such as straw, leaves, shredded clean paper ( high in carbon). Soak each layer as you build. It is exactly the same principles as making a compost heap except on a larger scale.

6. Planting can be done into the top mulch layer. Trowel a small hole, fill with compost and plant small rooted seedlings. Water in well, using rainwater if you have it. The plant will eventually establish a strong root system in its nutritional base. The bed is not ready for root crops for 6 months -1year.
7. As the seedlings grow and the layers rot down, top up with more layers of manure and compost.

## How to build a no-dig garden on a sealed surface

1. Mark out the size of the beds and construct the sides. If using bricks, sleepers or other rectangular shaped materials, make sure you leave some gaps for drainage. The walls should be at least 50 cm high. The concrete will stain from the runoff water.
2. Place a 7-10mm layer of coarse screenings or scoria at the base for drainage.
3. Layer the materials as listed above.

## How to make liquid fertiliser or weed teas

You can save money and reduce waste by making your own liquid fertiliser, using weeds and herbs from the garden. Liquid fertiliser smells terrible but is great for your garden!

1. **Collect** a mixture of: rinsed seaweed; herbs such as comfrey, yarrow and valerian; stinging nettles; weed leaves; finished compost; and chicken or cow manure.
2. **Get a container** with a tight-fitting lid e.g. bucket or garbage bin.
3. **Fill** one-third of the container with a mix of the above ingredients, then fill with water. Stir from time to time. You can put the material into a mesh bag, pillow case or old stocking. Make sure you are not breeding mosquitoes. It will work better if you stir it every day.
4. **Strain** the liquid out after 4 -6 weeks and add some water to it until it looks like weak tea. Use gloves when straining and wash hands thoroughly afterwards as the liquid has a persistent smell.
5. **Water** your plants with the liquid fertiliser. The solid materials left over can be put into your compost.

You can also dilute worm castings from your worm farm for a rich pick me up tea. Diluted urine is also a good liquid fertiliser with none of the health risks of human faeces

**Adapted from: NSW Dept. of Environment & Climate Change website and Sustainable Gardening Australia online fact sheet**