



Sheila O'Riley, *The Ugly Gardener*

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Some say Sheila's style of no-till or sheet mulch gardening is *ugly* due to all the *trash* left and added to her gardens.

Sheila says, "I think my gardens are beautiful. The heavy layers of mulch conserve moisture, hold weeds down, build the soil structure, and save the soil from eroding. The same benefits farmers get from no-till farming"



Basic No-till Garden Recipe

Just like a basic cake recipe, the ingredients listed can be varied and embellished. This will make an approximately 4 foot x 4 foot garden. This method will be especially enjoyed by gardeners who are busy, don't like to pull weeds, and don't have time to water.

40 Sheets of Newspaper

5-gallon bucket 2/3 full of water

40 lb. bag of composted manure

1 leaf cart or garbage bag full of chipped wood

1 leaf cart or garbage bag full of dried leaves (preferably chopped)

1 leaf cart or garbage bag full of grass clippings (fresh is best)

1-2 gallons good garden soil or potting soil

Water

Put newspapers in bucket of water to completely wet. Open paper and lay on ground (over grass, weeds, old driveway, etc.) 4-6 sheets thick. Overlap edges. This becomes the weed barrier and will eventually compost. Spread composted manure over paper to attract the worms and other helpful soil organisms. The following layers should each be 2-4 inches deep. Spread wood chips next (this first layer should be coarse enough to allow air circulation). May need to use a rake to level—somewhat anyway. Water. Next layer is the dried leaves followed by grass clippings; leveling with rake if necessary and watering after each layer. You may plant into this garden right away or allow to *cook* (or compost) over a period of time. To plant seeds in a row, open up a furrow in the layers with a hoe or rake (I like to use my hands), spread in a one inch deep strip of soil, lay the seeds on the soil and cover with the recommended amount of additional soil. To transplant from a pot, simply open up a hole in the layers, set the plant in, (if desired, add a handful of soil around the soil ball of the plant) and pull the mulch back up around it. To broadcast seed, mix the seed in some soil and toss the soil around on the top of the garden.

If you find you need more garden space, simply add on. You can substitute or add any other organic material suitable for composting such as compost, chopped corn cobs, hay, cardboard boxes (for the weed barrier), shredded office paper, peat moss, sawdust, chopped stalks, straw, wood ashes, organic kitchen scraps, etc.

Although, you won't enjoy eating this recipe like a cake, you will enjoy eating the food it produces or enjoy seeing the beauty of the flowers and ornamental plants grown in it.

Resource Books: *Lasagna Gardening* by Patricia Lanza, *Weedless Gardening* by Lee Reich, *No-work Gardening* by Ruth Stout