

Edible Gardens Workshop 2: Daniel Sheridan

Choosing crops for small gardens, companion planting, seasonal gardens and no dig gardens:

This workshop moves directly from the balcony to the backyard.

ZONE 1 - Maximise available lawn (green space) for planting food. This can be a very low energy system and be done very cost effectively by being creative and resourceful.

NO DIG GARDEN

STEP 1: select a site that gets good sun and faces north east desirably. Do not be too concerned about weeds, these are important for nutrient layers in the garden. Cut any weeds or vegetation just above ground level to a maximum of 3cm. This can be mown or cut depending on the weeds and grass height; ultimately you should be left with an area resembling a lawn.

STEP 2: in this area clay soils are predominant. The addition of gypsum, lime or dolomite will help break up clay, or in sandy soils clay is added to help with moisture retention. In this layer, the following can be added...

- well rotted manures,
- blood and bone,
- compost and vegetable scraps.

This process encourages soil workers e.g. Worms to come up and help keep the garden fertile.

STEP 3: Cover entire area with wet newspaper, about 6-8 layers thick, or alternatively cardboard at one layer thick. Be careful not to pierce this layer to expose the bare ground. This process, known as sheet mulching keeps weeds from growing back by denying them of light. As the garden evolves the paper layer will break down.

STEP 4: Employ a good amount of compost and carbon material, the carbon and compost can be mixed and spread on quite thick. The compost can be a mix of worm castings, homemade compost, well rotted leaves etc. The carbon can be dried lawn clippings, dried leaves or straw bale mulch.

STEP 5: Mulch layer that is a continuum of our dried carbon material layered about 3 -4 inches thick.

STEP 6: Give the garden a good watering but only until water just starts to come out the edges of the area we are cultivating.

STEP 7: Make the planting mix. This should ultimately be one part river sand, one part organic soil mix and one part worm castings.

STEP 8: Planting nests and plant. Make holes through the layers down to the paper being careful not to pierce the paper. The radius of this hole should be about 7 to 10cm in diameter. Fill the empty hole with the planting mix, do this all through the garden at about 20 to 30cm apart, then start to plant the seeds and seedlings.

