

STARTING A VEGETABLE GARDEN - THE EASIEST WAY TO PREP YOUR SOIL. (TILL VS NO-TILL)

24, july, 2020

To start a vegetable garden, you will want to mark out where you want the growing areas, once you have done that and once you have chosen the perfect spot to grow your vegetable plants. You'll want to start preparing the soil, making it ideal to grow and nourish your plants

There are two ways you can go about it, both will be explained, and the merits and flaws will be shown for both. Here we will go into a small amount of detail on the structure of soils and how certain practices can impact this. Solely for the purpose of you understanding more how to improve and care for your soil



TILLAGE, WHAT IS IT.

-essentially this is the traditional way of caring and sorting out soil.this involves digging over the soil and adding in organic matter.

The merit to this - is that it's quick. I see this is a quick fix to get the soil to the way you need it and to quickly incorporate organic matter to the soil and loosen it up.

The flaws on the other hand are that it breaks the 'structure' of the soil.

-The structure of the soil is made up of aggregates,which are basically clumps of soil held together by 'gum' that the microorganisms excrete while going about the soil, it's also held together by organic matter.

When you till your soil you break these 'aggregates' or clumps up. All this does is make it more easily compacted- no air in the soil and the plants don't like that, it leads to run-off which is when the soil is washed away

easily by rain and other weather factors.(Excessive tillage is what lead to the dust bowl of america.)




Tilling your soil also immediately increases oxygen in the soil, this acts the same way as it does in your compost heap. When you turn that it speeds up the process that organic matter is broken down. This is bad news in the soil, unlike in the compost. This is because it means less organic matter which means that the soil structure will degrade and it won't be holding onto water and nutrients the same way. This increase in activity also increases the co2 emissions released by the microorganisms and fungi. Which means that you're stopping the soil providing that service for our planet which helps climate change and global food security. on holding co2 emissions in it and instead releasing it all.

NO-TILL. WHAT IS IT

The second method involves simply laying your favourite mulch on the ground where you want your bed.

Now if it's a weedy area then ways you can remove those weeds is by mulching. Using mulches such as shredded newspaper , straw, wood chips work very well and lay it on where you want your bed - if that's on top of



grass-just layer it on top, wood chips work particularly well on grass at a depth of 9 inches.leave that for half a year to a year.

If you already have bare soil ready to plant in, but you don't want to dig over it. Then laying organic mulch such as mushroom compost, garden compost or well rotted manure. Or bark, wood chippings etc.

Put it on quite thickly. About 5 inch as a minimum (13 cm) ideally more, especially if you have heavy soil.

How does this work ?

When you lay mulch on top and leave the soil unharmed/undisturbed then the microorganisms, worms and don't forget the fungi will still be there undisturbed in their environment. Adding mulch like that on top will only stimulate and encourage more activity to bring that mulch into the soil for food and so breaking it down, improving the soil, increasing nutrients, water etc. all without you having to break your back to get your soil workable all it takes is time and mulch.



making sure its not a 'carpeting' mulch such as cardboard or carpet. What this does is drastically reduce gaseous exchange in the soil and it can be up to 10 x reduced. What this really means for you in the garden is that it will kill the worms and force the microorganisms to become dormant in the soil. The soil is a living thing and a world of its own, stopping oxygen getting in and co2 getting out will just make everything a lot worse

Get in touch, email us !! CardenEden@orevalleyha.org.uk