

# No Dig Gardening

Esther Dean developed the No Dig Garden in the 1970's and published this in her book **Growing without Digging** first published in 1977.

The garden is made on top of the existing ground, using newspaper, lucerne hay, straw and compost. It does not require any digging to build, or to maintain. Esther described her garden as *“simply a backyard vegetable garden, divided into several beds and maintained using organic principles. It is made without toil, without digging, without sweat and is easy enough for a child or old person to build.”*

The process is relatively simple. Once you have defined the area where you wish to use as a garden you build the layers as follows:

1. Spread a layer of newspaper a good ¼ inch deep. Make sure the newspaper is well overlapped to prevent the lawn from growing through. Do not use coloured paper or cardboard.
2. Cover the newspaper with pads / biscuits of lucerne hay (as it comes from the bale).
3. Over this layer sprinkle a light dusting of organic fertilizer or dry poultry manure.
4. Cover this with a layer about 8 inches deep of loose straw and sprinkle again with the same fertilizer.
5. Finally on top put a patch of good compost, 3 to 4 inches deep and about 18 inches across, where seeds are to be planted.



Note: One bale of lucerne hay and one bale of straw make a good-sized garden.

Esther Dean lived in the temperate climate zone of Sydney and her preference was to make this garden at the end of August, *“when it is the season to plant summer vegetables such as zucchini, cucumber, squash and pumpkin.”* In our cold climate this timing would equate to the end of October.

At the end of a season's growing the layers of the garden will have composted down and melted into each other, and the ground is ready for the second crop which will be productive for the next season's crop. No digging is needed. All that is needed is to add another layer of compost and / or manure and replant. To maintain the fertility of the garden rotate the crop and add compost, cow manure, liquid manure, lucerne hay, etc when necessary.

## Reference