



Sustainability Newsletter

Great ideas for your garden!

March 2016

The snow hasn't melted yet, but it's time to start thinking about your garden. If you are pondering starting or expanding your space, consider the idea of "lasagna gardening". This is a no-dig, no-till gardening method that results in rich, fluffy soil with very little work from the gardener. The name has nothing to do with what you'll be growing in this garden, but rather, the method of building the garden. It is essentially adding layers of organic materials that will "cook down" over time, resulting in rich, fluffy soil that will help your plants thrive.

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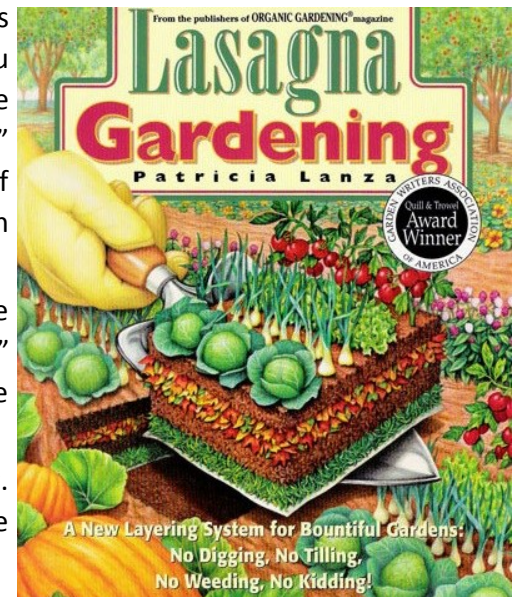
Also known as "sheet composting" lasagna gardening is great for the environment, because you're using your yard and kitchen waste and essentially composting it in place to make a new garden. One of the best things about it is how easy it is. You don't have to remove existing sod and weeds and you just put down layer upon layer. The following materials are all perfect for lasagna gardens: grass clippings, leaves, fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea leaves and tea bags, weeds (if they haven't gone to seed), manure, compost, seaweed, shredded newspaper or junk mail, pine needles, spent blooms, trimmings from the garden and peat moss. The first layer consists of either brown corrugated cardboard or three layers of newspaper laid directly on top of the grass or weeds in the area you've selected for your garden. Wet this layer down to keep everything in place and start the decomposition process. The grass or weeds will break down fairly quickly because they will be smothered.

Then you'll want to alternate layers of "browns" such as fall leaves, shredded newspaper, peat and pine needles with layers of "greens" such as vegetable scraps, garden trimmings and grass clippings. In general, you want your "brown" layers to be about twice as deep as your "green"

layers, but there's no need to get finicky about this. What you want at the end of your layering process is a two-foot tall layered bed. You'll be amazed at how much this will shrink down in a few short weeks.

When should you make a lasagna garden? Fall is an optimum time, but if you make it in the spring or summer, you will need to consider adding more "soil-like" amendments to the bed, such as peat or topsoil. That way, you can plant in the garden right away.

This is just the beginning of information that's out there for Lasagna Gardening. Check out your local library or bookstore for books on the topic or jump into the wealth of information that's available on the internet.



This newsletter can be viewed online at:

www.rdbn.bc.ca/environmentalservices/recycling/sustainability-newsletter



The RDBN's Environmental Services Department is now on Facebook! Like us at "Sustainable RDBN"

Creative Cardboard Reuse

Starting on July 1, 2016, all transfer stations and landfills in the RDBN will not accept any cardboard as garbage. For residents, this means that you should collect and drop off your cardboard at your local recycling facility. Industrial, commercial and institutional customers will be responsible for arranging cardboard recycling services directly with a local collector or service provider and paying associated costs.



But, even better than recycling our corrugated cardboard products, let's look at creative ways to re-use them!!



A handwritten thank-you card will never go unappreciated. So what could be better than using the original gift box for your message? Cardboard "postcards" could be personalized with rubber stamps, stickers or your own original artwork!

Here's a natural idea: dress up a simple cardboard box with a few embellishments, then line it with a plastic bag with a few drainage holes. You are now ready to move a plant into a pretty new home.



Blank canvases are expensive. But shoe box tops are not. Give them a coat of primer and white paint and then use just as you would a canvas. Decorate at will!

This is the recycler's take on the traditional pine cone bird feeder. Use a cardboard toilet paper roll as your base with the peanut butter and roll it in bird seed. Then slip a string or ribbon through it and hang from a tree close to your window. Let the show begin!



Another great décor idea is to find boxes that fit the space you need storage in. Then hot glue 4 ply jute twine around the boxes. Finish with a fabric liner, if you like. Voila! Beautiful storage bins that cost a fraction of what you would pay in a store.

Don't forget that your garden would be a good place to re-use cardboard, whether you are lasagna gardening or not!!

And best of all, by re-using products that we have around our house, we reduce the waste that goes to our landfills!

Proper Disposal of Wood Ashes

As the weather starts to warm up, it's time to clean out our wood burning stoves! We'd like to remind you, however, not to place ashes in the garbage. None of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako's transfer stations or landfills will accept ashes. Ashes generated from the cleaning of wood burning appliances can retain heat over a very long period of time. Even if you may think they are not a hazard, when mixed with garbage waste, ashes can have catastrophic results. To learn about safer and more eco-friendly methods of wood ash disposal, take a look at some of the ideas below.



Eco-friendly Ways to Dispose of Wood Ashes

Before you dispose of your ashes using any of the following methods, make sure they have been left to cool for at least 2-3 days in a metal pail or garbage can and stirred often (hot ashes will melt plastic), this will ensure that there are no remaining hot embers.

- 1. Place wood ashes in the compost bin.** Ashes are a valuable source of lime, potassium, and trace elements, which can be a great addition to your backyard compost when added in small quantities. The main component of wood ash is calcium carbonate, which increases soil alkalinity, helpful in neutralizing acidic pH levels in soil. When adding ashes to the compost bin, make sure to only sprinkle a small amount on each layer. Adding too much can ruin the mix.
- 2. Place ashes around shrubs and perennial plants as fertilizer.** Using a cup measure, spread ash evenly on the soil around plants. Rake the ash into the soil lightly. Make sure not to leave ash in piles, because if it is too concentrated in one place, excessive salt may leach into the soil, damaging plants.
- 3. Use ashes to de-ice your driveway.** Instead of using salt to melt ice on your driveway and walkways, which ends up in groundwater, try wood ashes. A generous sprinkle of ash on icy areas of your driveway will provide sufficient traction for anyone walking across the ice, with no harm to the environment or the concrete surfaces underneath. In the spring, the ashes will dry up and be blown onto your lawn and garden, helping to fertilize the soil.



Don't forget that you can use your ash in limited amounts in your lasagna garden!

When using ashes in the ways described above, be sure to follow these guidelines:

- Protect yourself when applying wood ash. Wear eye protection and gloves. Depending on the fineness of the ash, you may want to wear a dust mask.
- Do not use ash from burning trash, cardboard (if it contains glue), coal, or pressure-treated, painted or stained wood. These substances contain trace elements, harmful to many plants when applied in excessive amounts.

Freezer Leftover Recipes

Do you have a stash of frozen produce from last year? Get it out and use it up before it's time to start harvesting again! It will add some variety to your diet and gear us up for spring.

You may be asking, "Can I substitute frozen rhubarb for fresh rhubarb in recipes?" The answer is yes! Most rhubarb recipes that require fresh rhubarb in the ingredient list can be substituted with rhubarb from the freezer. When making a rhubarb stew or a drink or punch, use the rhubarb frozen. If using it frozen, that is without thawing it first, reduce or eliminate the addition of any water listed in the ingredients or directions. There is plenty of water in the rhubarb which has been frozen and adding more will make the recipe too watery. When making other recipes, such as cake, muffins, bread, etc., it is a good idea to thaw the rhubarb prior to preparing the recipe.

Thaw the rhubarb on the kitchen counter the evening before, in a sieve over a bowl, and discard the excess liquid (or use it to add to a rhubarb punch recipe). You will notice that, after the rhubarb has thawed, it will appear to have shrunk. It is best to usually thaw a little extra rhubarb to make up for this.



Rhubarb Strawberry Crunch

Ingredients

1 cup white sugar	1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour	1 cup packed brown sugar
3 cups sliced fresh strawberries	1 cup butter
3 cups diced rhubarb	1 cup rolled oats

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C)
2. In a large bowl, mix white sugar, 3 tablespoons flour, strawberries and rhubarb. Place the mixture in a 9x13 inch baking dish
3. Mix 1 1/2 cups flour, brown sugar, butter and oats until crumbly. You may want to use a pastry blender for this. Crumble on top of the rhubarb and strawberry mixture
4. Bake 45 minutes in the preheated oven, or until crisp and lightly browned



Rhubarb Curd

Ingredients

2 eggs	1/4 cup water
1 cup granulated sugar	2 tbsp. lemon juice
2 cups finely chopped rhubarb	1/4 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into 6 cubes

Directions

1. Whisk eggs with 3/4 cup sugar in large bowl
2. Combine rhubarb with remaining 1/4 cup sugar and water in a medium saucepan set over medium-high. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium. Gently boil until rhubarb is soft, 7 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat. Whisk rhubarb until smooth. Whisk in lemon juice.
3. Whisk rhubarb mixture slowly into egg mixture. Scrape back into saucepan and set over medium-low. Continue cooking, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until thick, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in butter, a cube at a time, until smooth. Chill completely before using.

