

Planting Directly in a No Till Garden



There are many good ways of sowing (planting) outdoors. The method described here is a “no till” version that we use because it reduces weed pressure and is quick to do in a small, intensive garden.

TOOLS & SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Scuffle hoe (a.k.a. Stirrup hoe)
- A container for weeds
- A garden fork or broad fork
- A garden rake
- Quality compost of fine texture
- Seeds appropriate for season, light, protection, needs, etc.
- A hand trowel or spade (optional)
- A garden hose and “shower” setting, or a watering can with a rosette
- Planting log and pencil

STEPS:

1. If needed, dig out weeds with tap roots: dandelion, thistle, dock, comfrey, etc. to get the whole root. Use the scuffle hoe like a vacuum cleaner to uproot or cut any weeds. Do not go over a section more than once, because you will cut up and bury weeds. Lift out weeds and discard them into the compost bin ADD pile.
2. Methodically fork the entire bed. Do not toss like a salad, rather, put the fork in all the way and wiggle the fork, pull it out and put it back in about every four inches.

3. Use the garden rake to level the bed. You can use the back of the garden rake just as well as the tines.
4. Rake quality compost on top of the bed. Ideally, we want to add four inches of compost to every bed each year, but we divide it between every time we plant. Spread about a half inch to an inch of compost evenly onto the bed at a time.
5. Choose your seeds or see which seeds have been planned by the sowing calendar. Packets have different amounts of seeds in them, so keep records until you can estimate how many packets you need for dense germination in a large bed. Ideally, each vegetable should touch its neighbor when it is $\frac{3}{4}$ its full size (this reduces weed pressure and water evaporation). Sow an intensive bed as if you are sprinkling herbs onto a pizza. Making circular movements, make three passes over the entire bed. Pay special attention to the corners when seeding and watering.
6. Checking the seed packet for desired seed depth, scoop compost into your hand and sprinkle on top of the bed to the depth recommended for the seeds. Keep in mind that incorrect seed depth is one of the most common problems with getting good germination. Do not stroke the surface to smooth! Only sprinkle to cover.
7. Water thoroughly and deeply. You should get small puddles that last a little while. You want it soaked under the surface.
8. Record your planting to include what you planted, the cultivar, the seed company, the date (under "Direct Sow," the amount of packets or seeds you used, your name or initials, where it was planted (letter or number ID), and the days to maturity as listed on the seed packet.
9. Check seeds daily for water needs (and protection from cold or heat) for at least a week, probably two. Seeds must remain moist and protected during the germination period! If they dry out even once when they are starting out, they die. Water daily.

© 2019 by Holly Whiteside