

Prepping the garden site

"Pay me now or pay me later"

Paul Drobot

Preparing the site is like the old oil commercial where a car mechanic is looking at a broken engine and he says "*pay me now or pay me later*". Meaning that if the car owner had changed their oil they wouldn't have the major car repair expense. This is true for gardens. Proper site preparation will save lots of time, effort and money in the long run.

Once the garden is established it is harder to do major soil amending. Getting the soil ready for planting can be as simple as adding some organic matter or more complex and time consuming. Remember that organic matter is transitional. It is decomposed. The following is a short list of "site prep" scenarios for a potential garden site.

Lawn sites

- kill the existing grass
 - can be accomplished by using a herbicide
 - covering with plastic or other material to kill the grass
- if you are going to hand dig
 - the soil clods can be turned back in to the soil because they contain lots of organic matter in the form of roots and plant material
 - if the soil clods are made up of very poor soil material they may need to be removed
 - if the grass was not killed initially they can be turned upside down and allowed to dry for a week or two out to help kill some of the grass
- turn in the dead grass or grass clods into the existing soil, this will add organic matter to the soil
- raise bed at least 3-4 inches by adding more soil
- if this is not done the bed may settle below the grass level and become a swamp
- amend the soil
- firm the soil
 - walk on the soil to firm it down so it won't settle below the plants crown
 - in large gardens I walk a tiller (without the bar down) over the soil

Soil sites

- kill the existing plant material
 - any weeds left at this point will come back to haunt you
- till or hand mix bed
- amend existing soil at this point
- raise bed by adding soil

- amend soil
- firm the soil

Raised Beds

- using man made structural material
 - landscape timbers
 - railroad ties
 - 2 by lumber
 - concrete cast units
- using natural material
 - rocks and boulders
 - lannon stone

"There is no soil that is so perfect that the addition of some soil amending material will not increase the soils productivity"