

BUILDING A LASAGNA GARDEN

With this approach, **you can build a garden purely on kid power**, without having to dig sod or fire up a tiller. By smothering grass or a weedy patch with layers of mulch and organic matter -- akin to assembling lasagna layer by layer -- you're setting up an environment that will suppress unwanted plant growth and encourage decomposing organisms to turn your "ingredients" into rich soil.

Materials

- Newspaper
- Water source and hose
- Organic materials: grass clippings, hay, straw, leaves, weeds, livestock manure -- whatever is available
- Sawdust, wood chips, or bark mulch for paths (optional)
- Tools: wheelbarrow, bucket or tub, gloves, lawn mower (optional), black plastic (optional)

Step 1: Level existing vegetation. Use a lawn mower, leaving clippings in place, or stomp tall grass and weeds flat to the ground.



Step 2: Define your beds. Use stakes or a garden hose to mark the edges of your bed. Beds should be narrow enough that students can reach the center without straining. That way, they can work from the paths and stay off the beds, preventing compaction.

Step 3: Smother it! Fill a tub with water and moisten 4 to 6 pages of newspaper at a time (and see how long it takes before someone becomes engrossed in an article). Lay the damp paper over the defined area, overlapping the edges by at least two inches. If you create multiple beds, cover the pathways between them with newspaper topped with a thick layer of sawdust, bark mulch, or wood chips.

Step 4: Mulch, mulch, and mulch some more. Spread layers of organic matter (see Materials list). Keep off the bed as much as possible to reduce compaction. Spray dry materials with water until they are as damp as a well-wrung sponge before adding the next layer. If you use materials that contain weed seed, such as hay or uncomposted horse manure, use them as lower layers in your lasagna to minimize weed growth.