

An Experiment in “Posture Gardening “–

When we talk about gardening many of us visualize pulling weeds on our hands and knees in the hot summer sun ... or bending over a long handled hoe with aching shoulders. What if we could supply a consistent supply of greens and table vegetables and not have the aching back or tired shoulders? What if the “garden” were automatically watered, and had the ability to be protected from heavy rains, or scorching sun? Sounds a little more pleasant doesn't it?

Earlier this spring, I decided to try an experiment in modified gardening techniques. As I spoke about the concept, I found myself calling my little experiment “posture gardening”. Over the next few months, I will be documenting the progress and sharing the successes or failures of my little experiment.

Let's begin with a summary of the construction techniques and a few pictures of the “posture gardening” beds. The idea is to build a waist high frame filled with soil that will allow us to grow shallow rooted greens and other vegetables.



The actual materials consist of 8 cinder blocks, 3 landscape timbers, a 2'x8' section of 6" cattle panel, and some heavy fabric weed block. This can be modified to be more attractive ... the concept is shallow soil, with comfortable height. However this is a very economical way of creating several beds.

I cut two 20" sections of landscape timbers to create the optimum spacing that maximizes the available 50" width of cattle panel and 36" weed block fabric. After corner nailing the timber spacers in place, the cattle panel section is attached to the top of the timbers using barbed wire staples, and the whole assembly is then turned upside down and rests on the cinder blocks. Lay the landscape fabric in the bed leaving enough fabric to fold over the ends. Fold and tuck the corners, and staple the fabric to the timbers. The resulting bed is then filled with a potting soil mix. You could use bagged potting soil or purchase in bulk from a local soil yard. What you want is a 100% organic mix – no need for a lot of sand, or perlite. I am using a premixed product from Natures Way. It is 50% leaf mold, and 50% composted hardwood mulch. To prevent the fabric from slipping or sagging, I start by filling the corners and then work toward the middle. Then gently level and tamp with a short piece of 2x2" wood. You do not want to compact the soil mix. Total cost for 4 beds is \$120.00 including potting soil.

The planting technique I used for creating “rows” is simply pressing the corner edge of a piece of 2x2” lumber to a depth of approx ¾ inch. Look at photo below, and you can see the “row” depression that is ready for seeds.

Another method is to simply “broadcast” seed the bed in sections with your favorite micro green mix. As you can see, after two months the bed is full and ready to harvest.



My first set of vegetables, based on root zone depth, personal preference and growing season was lettuce mix, arugula, beets, spinach, and green onions. I also transplanted some individual lettuces to test the ability to grow a “full size” head, rather than cutting baby lettuce mix. I fertilized the soil mix using a mixture of micro-life, with cottonseed mead, bone meal, blood meal, k-mag, and ecomin. I feel the use of straight micro-life would have been just fine, however this mix is the basic fertilizer that I use in my garden and is a little more balanced for my personal preference.



As my thoughts progress to larger vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, squash and beans I will be incorporating standard containers at the corners and perhaps some trellises to provide more growing options.

An important addition to the system has been to add automatic watering using micro spray heads with a battery operated timer hooked to a garden hose. I use 3 heads per bed set on 12” stakes. See above photo.

The first harvest –



Cutting with a pair of scissors for the lettuce mix and arugula



Spinach, lettuce mix, and arugula.



Triple rinse – simple trays and a lot of patience.



Baby spinach

Stay tuned as the experiment continues!

For more information visit <http://www.homesteadservices.org>

There are also some videos of the process at You Tube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rcr8F6gDEg4>