

Gardening God's Way

With No-Till Gardening



My Yoke is Easy, and My Burden is Light...

By Kisi Watkins

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About a week ago I discovered an online video that is changing my life, and so I forwarded it to everyone --including YOU!! It's called "Back to Eden" and is about "no-till gardening". A man named Paul up in Washington state discovered, with Heavenly Father's help and direction, that if you always keep a cover on your soil, a mulch like leaves or wood chips, namely something natural that can break down over time and become compost, your soil will go from being clay, rock, and hardpan to being wonderfully aerated, loamy, and nutritious soil. When we till it, we wreck the eco-system that the soil is making, and we have to keep re-tilling it and adding fertilizers, more compost, watering, rotating crops, and worrying about pH, etc. But when we keep a mulch on the soil and just add to that over the top as needed every few years, we don't have to worry about any of those things. And as the mulch breaks down, the rain and any watering we end up needing to do washes nutrients into the developing soil like a compost tea.

Here's what happened with Paul in Washington. First he noticed that although his soil was total clay and rocks in one place and 80% rocks in another place, all around his property were tons of huge and beautiful pine trees growing with no tilling or fertilizing or watering by him or help from him of any kind. And at the base of those trees and all around them was thick and luscious soil with a covering of needles, leaves, and wood chips. He prayed, and what he got from Heavenly Father was essentially this:

In the old days, we harnessed oxen with a yoke to plow/till the soil, but the Savior tells us:

- Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:29-30)
- For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Is. 55:9)
- Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt. 11:28)

So seeing how God had set things up to succeed with little or no work, he began to copy what God was doing in his own garden. At first he used hay and sheep manure for his covering and then later discovered that wood chips with a good mix of needles and leaves (from tree service companies) worked the best. Before he did any of this, his soil was so hard that he couldn't break it up with a pick. But after doing this he developed lush and nutritious soil, and his garden is more beautiful than any I have ever seen. He threw away his tiller and only uses a rake now. Gardening has become a pleasure with minimal but pleasant effort. Of course, it takes time for the cover (the mulch) to break down and become wonderful soil, but you can speed this up and be able to plant immediately by first laying down 2"-3" of fully composted compost. **BUT DON'T DIG IT IN!** Here's what you do (and you can even do this on top of grass without using RoundUp):

1. First, pull or dig out any significant problem weeds. If you're doing this on top of grass, lay down newspaper sheets, 6 sheets thick, overlapping them enough that there are no cracks for the grass to grow through. This and the other layers of compost and mulch you're going to put on top of this will kill the grass with no chemicals needed, and the grass will break down into soil over time.
2. Second, cover the ground or newspaper with 2"-3" of fully-composted compost. If you use compost that is still in the process of breaking down, all the nitrogen will be tied up for this process and unavailable to your new garden plants.
3. Third, lay 3"-4" of whatever mulch you find handy: wood chips work best, but leaves, grass, hay, whatever! Do an initial watering so that the mulch can absorb water and the underlying layer of compost will be moist for the germination of your seeds.
4. Fourth, when you're ready to plant your seeds, move the mulch aside and be sure to plant the seeds in the bottom compost layer. Wait until your plants come up a few inches before you carefully move the mulch back around them.

In Utah we'll probably have to water some, but not as much as we've been doing. Where Paul lives in Washington, they actually get less rainfall annually than we do in Provo (they get about 16" and we get about 20" of rainfall per year), but it's not as hot. He hardly ever waters at all. And he has not had to water his fruit orchards in 31 years. Over time as the wood chips break down, they feed the soil more fertilizer like a compost tea, and without our having to do any work. Paul shows us how it works, and I've never seen a more lush garden. He says he never has to worry about pH or rotating crops or tilling or fertilizing and does very minimal watering, if any. And his gardens and produce get better every year because the soil is getting better every year!

Here's the link to watch the movie about this -- it's a full-length movie!! 1 hr. 43 min. long, and worth every second -- and makes a great date night. :) You will understand much more from watching it than from what I've written.

<http://backtoedenfilm.com/>

Go there and click on the link that says "Watch 'Back to Eden' Film". If you're not motivated enough, watch this 3 min. trailer of the movie and you'll become motivated!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGZ1WyOWESo>