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Bagging it

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Image not found
http://kgi.org/sites/default/files/u636/Cropped_photo_of_veg_garden2.JPG

Above: My vegetable garden in early spring a few years ago, when it was smaller and a lot tidier than it is at the moment. I'm a big fan of raised-bed, no-till gardening. These beds were made the easiest, cheapest way I could think of at the time: I ordered a truckload of soil and then mounded it where I wanted the beds to be.

This was the year I was *not* going to have a vegetable garden. I am working (not always the case for the self-[un]employed) on a worthwhile project that is likely to take a lot of time.* So The Plan was to give the garden a rest for a year, cover the beds with whatever I could scrounge, and hope to knock back the weeds that have been slowly taking over since the photo above was taken.

But as for vegetables, well, some years you just have to support the local farmer's market. Right?

You know what they say about best laid plans. (I think it's something to the effect that if you make plans, mice laugh.) So first, I received the email announcing creation of the new Kitchen Gardeners International website, which looks great and got me thinking how much I'd like to be a more active participant. However, I told myself I'd stick to giving tips about how to attract wildlife to the garden, since that's what I know most about anyway.

And then the new issue of Mother Earth News [1] arrived, complete with a tantalizing article by our own Roger Dorion about the joys of growing and eating lettuce. Which made me think, "Well, maybe some greens ..."

And then I saw the article titled "Start a Quick and Easy Food Garden", and of course those magic words *quick* and *easy* suckered--I mean, drew--me in right away. Next thing I knew I was sitting in my bed at 4 am, cats on lap, mug of coffee on hand, drawing garden plans.

Barbara Pleasant's article outlines an approach that has a lot of appeal for me. For one, it's a no-till, raised-bed approach. For another, it really does look easy. All you do is buy 40 lb bags of topsoil, punch holes in one side for drainage, cut an opening in the other side for planting, and lay them down on top of weeds, grass, or anything else you're willing to kill.

As you can see from the photo, I have a lot of grass left to kill. So this approach could work well for me. Another big advantage is it will give me at least a year off from weedy garden soil. And while trying out the new beds created using bags, I'll also trying to de-weedify the old beds.

So I guess that instead of bagging my vegetable garden, I'll be well, bagging it. We'll see how this works out. And in the meantime, I do also plan to pass along tips on how to attract wildlife to your garden.

*** I'm working with a group of young foresters to educate owners of small woodlands about environmentally friendly ways to manage their forests. Cool, huh?**

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[1] http://www.motherearthnews.com/