

5. Loosen soil with a spading fork to improve drainage.
6. Cover the ground with 6 or more overlapping layers of newspaper or one overlapping layer of cardboard. This layer of brown material keeps light out and smothers the grass and weeds underneath.
7. Wet the newspaper or cardboard thoroughly.
8. If using a framed raised bed, place it on-site before adding the first layer.
9. Cover your first layer with a one-inch layer of a green material such as fresh grass clippings, green manure, or vegetable scraps.
10. Top the green layer with an inch of brown materials, such as leaves, straw, and bark.
11. Add a one-inch layer of green material such as fresh green weeds (minus the seed heads), grass clippings, etc.
12. Cover with another one-inch layer of brown material.
13. Continue to add alternating layers of brown and green material until the final height is at least 18 inches.
14. Be sure to end with a brown layer which acts like a blanket.
15. The final layer may be covered with overlapping burlap coffee sacks to keep the pile neat. Burlap will decompose over time or may be removed when planting the bed.
16. If a pile becomes too wet, cover it with a sheet of black plastic loosely weighted down at the sides. This will help warm the pile and encourage faster decomposition. It also helps prevent nutrients from leaching.
17. A bed is “finished” and ready for planting when the layers have decomposed to the point that the original materials are no longer recognizable and it looks and smells like fresh earth.
18. If you can’t wait, top your newly formed bed with a 2-3 inch layer of compost or garden soil and plant directly into it.

#### **Adding new materials over time**

- After you build the initial bed, you may continue to add alternating layers of brown and green materials.
- Be sure to always end with a brown layer.
- When adding new materials to a planted bed, leave at least six inches between plants and fresh, decaying materials.

#### **OSU Extension Service Resources**

Visit your OSU Extension Service office at 200 Warner-Milne Road, Oregon City, for publications or get them online at <http://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu>

#### **Master Gardener™ Advice**

- Call the Home Horticulture Helpline: 503-655-8631 (Clackamas County), 503-821-1150 (Washington County), 503-445-4608 (Multnomah County).
- For 10-Minute University™ handouts and class schedule, visit [www.cmastergardeners.org](http://www.cmastergardeners.org)
- Look for Master Gardeners at area Farmers’ Markets.

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