



How to make a Hugelkultur Bed

“Hugelkultur” means “Hill growing” - you can also call it a hoggle. It is a raised bed which aims to make use of wood waste to help store carbon in a system, so it is a very good feature to add to a sustainable garden. It's claimed to remain fertile for 20 years or more and need almost no watering. It's a brilliant solution for anyone who has to make more wood-waste than they can deal with, so it should be very useful to those with hedges who make a lot of clippings. It should also be a good help to those on heavy clay, and it is warmer than normal growing beds, as the breakdown of the wood generates heat and the rise and eventual texture of the soil will stop it from getting waterlogged in winter.

The basic structure is a base layer of rotten wood before laying soil and compost. The layer of wood works as a source of nutrients for your growing bed. It also produces air pockets for the roots of the plants. As the hoggle ages, the wood will shrink making loads of smaller air pockets helping the plant roots even more. They are also very good

at keeping everything moist - the wood soaks up water making them easier to manage as they need less watering. The hill will gradually get smaller as the rotting continues.



Here is how we made our version.

First - you need to dig a hole, which may seem a bit counter-intuitive as you are aiming to make a hill, but it helps keep the base-layer moist, and in place.

Then you add your waste wood. It's got fresh wood-chip and hedge-clippings on a base of rotten wood, some of which already had fungus growing on it. The pile can get quite a lot higher than this, but we discovered a lot of the wood chip had bindweed roots all through it, so we just used the good stuff. We can always add to it.





We also added some fresh grass clippings to help the wood to break down faster, and we gave it a good drenching of recycled tea and coffee (urine!). These extra things provide more nitrogen, to help the wood break down without taking nitrogen from the plants we want to grow.

Apparently we could also add waste straw, cardboard, newspaper and compost.

If you are putting this on grass, the sods should be dug up and saved to place upside down on top of the hill at this point. Without any sods, we just piled the soil back on top and planted up, with an outer ring of wild strawberries and squashes on top.



Here is the hoggle with the squashes starting to grow nicely. We are really interested to see how well it does, but we can already say that it seems to need less extra watering than we expected. In the first year, the squashes thrived with only 3 waterings in the first few weeks. The hill is starting to sink now, so we may dig into it to see what it looks like.