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## GARDENING

### How to start a no-dig garden

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PAT MARFISI calls Esther Deans' no-dig method of gardening "absurdly easy." Here, he offers tips on where to buy alfalfa and straw and how to create a 300-square-foot vegetable garden, which took him only two hours to complete:

#### MATERIALS:

Newspaper, alfalfa, straw, compost, blood meal and bone meal.

#### BASICS:




1. Lay 10 to 20 sheets of newspaper on the ground -- soil, grass or concrete. This stops weeds and attracts worms. Saturate with water and dust with blood meal and bone meal.
2. Add a pad of alfalfa and dust with blood and bone meal. Bales of hay and straw come apart in 2- to 3-inch-thick pads.
3. Next come 8 inches of straw, again dusted with blood and bone meal. Don't skimp on the alfalfa and straw, Marfisi says, because "this stuff really compresses in the first few weeks and then you lose the benefits of low water need and thriving plants."
4. Wet all this down.
5. Finally, top off with 3 to 4 inches of compost, which also will compress.
6. Now plant seeds or seedlings.

When Marfisi started the garden, he used about five bales of alfalfa and six to seven bales of straw. The cost was around \$225. After the initial setup, he has used much less material after each crop -- about three to four bales a year for a total cost of \$50 to \$75.

#### ***FINDING FODDER***

Alfalfa and hay can be found at grain and hay suppliers. There are a few near the L.A. Equestrian

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Center in Burbank. At Stephens Hay & Grain in Glendale, for example, a 110-pound alfalfa bale is \$18.50; a 60-pound bale of straw is \$7.50. Delivery is available.

### **NO DIG BOOKS**

"Esther Deans' No Dig Gardening & Leaves of Life," by Esther Deans. The 2001 reprint is available at [harpercollins.com.au](http://harpercollins.com.au).

"How to Have a Green Thumb Without an Aching Back: A New Method of Mulch Gardening," by Ruth Stout.

"The One-Straw Revolution," by Masanobu Fukuoka.

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