

OL 304 Assignment Four Homework

Online Learning: OL 304 Food Security, Nutrition and Home Gardens 2

Online Learning: Vegetable Garden Care and Maintenance for Family Gardens and Community Gardens.

Center for Sustainable Development: <https://csd-i.org/vegetable-garden-care-family-gardens-community-gardens/>

This week's resources:

Assignment Four Discussion

Magee Example Project Assignment Four

OL 303 Specific Links

Healthy Harvest: pp. 46

Sustainable Nutrition Manual

OL 304 Specific Links

IDEP Home & Community Gardens Module 4: pp. 71 -- 99

Permaculture Manual - Garden Africa: pp. 82 – 95

Creating Your Own Compost- Garden Africa: PDF

Soil - Garden Africa: PDF

Assignment Four. Introduction to Soil and Compost

Part One: Learning About Soil

Read through the resources above for background information and some very well presented ideas about improving soil and making compost.

Simple steps in improving soil to share with your gardeners.

- Add organic material and compost as available when digging a new bed
- Mulch your garden beds with organic material
- Don't step on your new raised beds
- Continued to build and maintain compost piles
- Introduce earthworms
- Protect your soil micro-organisms from insecticides
- Rotate your crops each season
- Plant nitrogen fixing legumes

In doing your follow-up work with your gardeners you should be able to see how successfully they are following the activities above in improving their soil. These are simple, no-cost activities, that can make a world of difference in the quality of their soil. These are also things that they only need to do once a year, or twice a year, or three times a year as they plant crops. The only thing on the list that they will need to keep up with on a weekly or monthly basis is their compost pile.

So over the next few follow-up visits I would take simple notes on which of these activities are causing the greatest challenges for your gardeners. I would then go through the resources listed above and see if you can find helpful suggestions to overcome the challenges -- and that will be well accepted by your gardeners in your region. Probably more than anything else, you just need to be their greatest cheerleader and encourage them to keep moving forward.

Part Two: Composting

You can have a short, two-hour workshop with your gardeners to show one or two different ways of making compost. You could show them how to make compost by layering chopped up plant material with manure with plant-based kitchen scraps. You could dig a small pit and show them how they can throw these things in the pit to make compost.

And then in the next week when you do your follow-up, you can see how they did in the construction of their first compost piles.

The materials in compost piles will decompose most rapidly if they are fairly small, and if there's enough nitrogen containing manure -- and if there's just the right amount of moisture such that microorganisms begin to generate heat that assists in the breakdown of the materials. The compost pile will need to be turned periodically with a pitchfork so that the compost materials on the outside gets turned into the middle of the pile.

The homework to turn in will be:

1. A short list of the challenges and successes that your gardeners are having in improving their soil.
2. A short paragraph on how receptive your gardeners are to developing a compost pile.
3. A special challenge that your gardeners are facing it might be specific to your region -- like steep hillsides, or sandy soil, or drought. We will work on the special problem next week and assignment five.

Go to Magee's Example Project Assignment 4 to see what this could look like.

See you next week.