



# Straw Bale Gardening

(and Rainwater)



What?

The garden goes **IN** the bales,  
not **AROUND** them







Why?

Poor soil

Bermuda grass infestation

Higher beds

Creaky bones and squeaky joints!





# Where?

Accessible

East-west axis

Visual

Integrated into yard

Rainwater use



# Who?

Who will be doing the gardening?  
Any special considerations?



Make sure to get the right materials

Bales of straw

Edging

(corrugated metal or other similar material)

Posts

Misc.



# Bales – the most important part

Straw is  
yellow -  
YES

hay is  
green

Do not get  
Bermuda  
grass hay!!!



# Straw Bales

(about \$7.50/bale, weight about 80#)

Oat

Wheat

**NOT BARLEY**

# Hay Bales

Alfalfa (about \$25/bale)

Is it worth it for the nitrogen?

Nope!



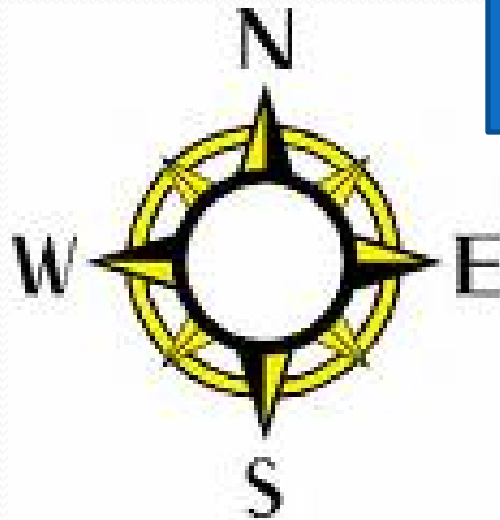


# Building the straw bale garden

Choose a site with 6 hours of sun



Place on East- West axis if possible  
(not as hot on east and west ends)

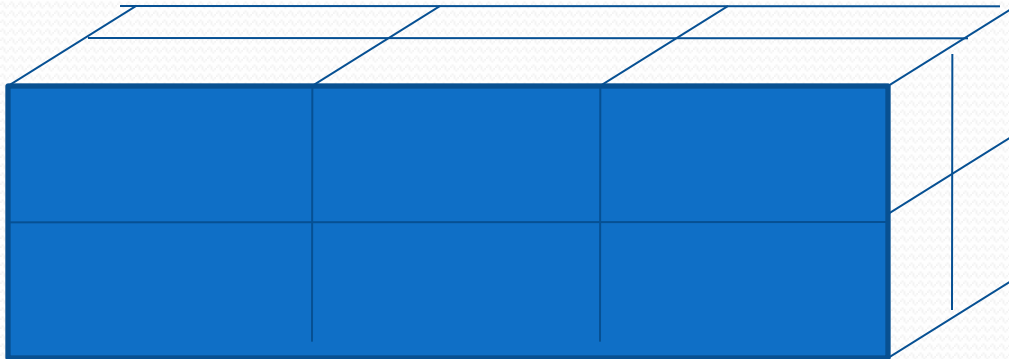


**GARDEN**



# Size the garden

- “Three string” straw bales are approximately 4 feet long, 2 feet high and 18” wide
- The gardener wants the garden 12 feet long, 4 feet wide and 38” tall = 48 sqft
- Therefore the garden will be made of 2 layers of 6 bales.



Ideally, the cut part of the bale is facing up (this one is not)



# Measure and mark the area





# Prepare and level the site





# Done! And there is the straw!





# Plastic if Bermuda grass





# Lay down the bales









# Done!





# Put on the sides (recycled roof metal)



# A note about using metal roofing

- Use unruined metal
- If must use metal with rust spots, paint with Rust-Oleum and then paint over with rubberized roof paint (Elastomeric is one trade name)
- Can paint inside of metal with the rubberized paint, rust or not, to help it last longer

# Cutting metal

- Metal roofing can be cut with a power saw with a blade for cutting metal.
- Don't forget tool and person safety when working with any kind of tools! (Glasses, gloves, keep tools out of working area, etc)











# Stakes



# Staking

- Use stakes that will penetrate ground deep enough to hold sides of garden (approx. 1 foot)
- Weight will push garden sides out as bales disintegrate
- 4 foot utility posts (just like short fence posts) with a metal plate at the bottom are good (approximately \$3.50 Home Depot)



# Lay out stakes and sides





# Place stakes equidistant





Pound in stakes with a sledgehammer getting them as close to the sides as possible





# Level sides

A line level

Dig out  
under the  
sides if need  
to lower  
them



# Wire corner edges and stakes together





Use galvanized wire – not tie wire









# Wire sides and stakes across bales





Close to done, the gardener is happy!





Add metal edging



# Presto!













# Complete garden

- Fill in spaces with loose straw
- If needed, get soil mix (3 – way is nice: 62% “topsoil”, 30% compost and 8% manure. This mix is from Cochise Stone for \$36/180 sqft)
- Bales can be planted in directly, or in soil placed on top.
- Leave 2-3 inches from the top of the garden to the top of the sides for mulch
- As the bales disintegrate, more soil should be added

# Adding soil







# Planting

- Follow instructions on handout
  - Wet bales for a few days
  - Sprinkle with ammonium phosphate to stimulate root growth
  - Cut a hole in the straw with a knife and plant, or plant in soil covering top of bales



# One year after building a straw bale garden



# First year tomatoes!





# Soaker hose









# Or just plant in one bale



You can put bales in a container. Make sure it can drain, and leave drain open.  
Add soil as bale disintegrates.







[http://www.savewater.com.au/library/Bluescope\\_Water/ColoVale6.JPG](http://www.savewater.com.au/library/Bluescope_Water/ColoVale6.JPG)

# Rainwater for the garden

$\frac{1}{2}$  gallon (or .60 gal)/sqft  
is needed to soak 1 foot deep

so,

60 gallons is needed for each 100 sqft  
of planted area each watering



# Gravity fed garden





# Watering trough (165 gal)





# 550 gallon tank



# Corrugated Metal Pipe













# Pumped for drip irrigation





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