

Some Basic Tips on Bed Prep for Beginning Gardeners:

Good bed prep in the beginning of the season makes for a lot less work later on. Before you've planted anything in the ground is the best time to revive the life of your soil. Remember, most problems you will encounter throughout the season come down to the health of your soil. You can't have a healthy plant without healthy, living soil. The more supportive your soil is of life (bugs, worms, microorganisms) the more your plants will produce and the less susceptible they'll be to disease, drought, pests, and weeds.

All life needs these three basic things to survive: air, water, and food. The same thing goes for the life of the soil. The more air in your soil, the more water your soil will hold. The more organic matter (food) in your soil, the more worm, insect, and microbial activity you'll have in the soil. Worms, insects, and microorganisms act as miniature tillers, digging around through the soil, eating up organic matter, and exuding nutrients for plant roots to suck up.

There are many strategies and methods you can use to attain these conditions. The simplest thing to do is to dig. Digging with a potato fork makes it easier to break up soil clumps. Break up clumps and remove all weeds—including the roots. Dig down as deep as you can. Add some organic matter like compost or decomposed manure. Adding organic matter every year will increase your soil quality and fertility. Make walking paths so that you aren't walking on your beds and compacting the soil.

We also offer tilling. Tilling is faster and easier on your back but is not as thorough. We still recommend after your plot has been tilled, that you go through by hand to remove weeds. As the season goes along, stay on top of your weeding. It's a lot less work weeding when weeds are short. Be sure to weed before the weeds go to seed and make more weeds. Mulching will cut down on your weeding and retain moisture in the soil.

Come by our office to check out our library for more information, to borrow tools, or to be connected with a garden mentor!