

OL 301 Assignment Four Discussion

Online Learning: OL 301

Learn How to Grow a Family Vegetable Garden

Center for Sustainable Development

<https://nonprofit.csd-i.org/learn-how-to-grow-a-family-vegetable-garden/>

How You Can Grow a Vegetable Garden: Fresh, nutritious vegetables for your family.

This week's resources on the Student Resource Page:

<https://nonprofit.csd-i.org/301-student-resource-page/>

OL 301 Assignment Four Homework Instructions

OL 301 Assignment Four Discussion

[How to Grow More Vegetables](#) Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Can Imagine. John Jeavons

[The Vegetable Gardener's Bible](#) – Edward C. Smith

Kitchen Garden Beds How To Card

Field Handbook on Forming Garden Beds & Planting Seeds

Workshop Lesson Plan: Preparing Family Garden Beds and Planting Seeds. Good for additional information.

Discussion 4. Soil Part Two: Creating a garden bed with a soft, open texture and full of nutrients.

This Week's Goal: To prepare your first garden bed—ready for planting next week.

Start small, keep it simple. Digging your first garden bed can be a lot of work. The soil possibly has not been worked for decades. Don't be shy about seeking help with the initial digging. Also, start with one small bed this week and then each week, or each month you can dig another small bed. Once we've prepared this bed, the soil will be much easier to dig next year in preparation for the next growing season—because it will be softer and fluffier.

Lay out your bed in preparation for beginning to dig. Don't make the bed too wide—you will want to be able to reach the middle of it from the side of the bed. So 3 to 4 feet in width is an ideal size (1 meter to 1.2 meters).

We're going to use a technique called double digging. The idea behind double digging is 1) to soften up the dirt to about 18 inches below ground level and 2) to get your soil amendments mixed in with the newly dug soil in the planting bed. In simple terms, you do this by removing the soil to the depth of one shovel blade, and then dig down in depth one more shovel blade to loosen up the lower layer of soil.

In the Student Resources you will find a how-to card on how to do this plus a field guide with careful descriptions. Also, both of these two books, *How to Grow More Vegetables* and *The Vegetable Gardener's Bible* have detailed descriptions with photos and illustrations.

The long-term expectation is that if you double dig your bed each year and add organic material each year the soil will become softer and fluffier so that your plants can get good root penetration. This also means that each year it will be easier to dig the bed and after some point you won't need to double dig it each and every growing season.

Since you have a week to complete this assignment you could do a little digging each day. At the end of the week the goal is to have the bed prepared, soil amendments added, and the bed nicely smoothed off ready to receive either seeds or seedlings next week.

In summary, here are some ideas:

1. Since this will be your first bed you don't need to invest in a lot of tools. Probably you can borrow a shovel from a friend for this first bed. I probably wouldn't invest a lot of money in garden tools until we know that I'm going to enjoy vegetable gardening for the long-term.
2. Don't be shy about asking for help. For example, you could invite some friends over for a brunch—and everyone could take a turn with the shovel!

Please move on to Assignment Four.