

STRAW BALE GARDENING BY MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER, MELODY BAHR. (2016)

Hay bale gardening is done by planting plants directly into hay bales without the use of soil. Before beginning, the hay bale must be conditioned for planting to ensure a hospitable environment for new plants. This process takes about 10 to 14 days. Water the hay bales for three days, apply fertilizer for six days and then water for a few more days.



Master gardener volunteer, Melody, had an enthusiastic audience ready to use her method she showed on how to use straw bales for an alternative method of gardening. She discussed the pros and cons and obviously she favors the pros of straw bale method of home gardening.

Link for more reading about this alternative method of container gardening:

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/WebPacket/Pages/NYCU-2016-03-StrawBaleGardening.aspx>



Check the internal temperature of the hay bale throughout the process using a meat thermometer. During the conditioning period, the internal temperature of the hay bale rises, but when the temperature stabilizes close to the air temperature outside, it is time for planting. Open a hole on the top of the hay bale and place a plant in it, pushing the hay around its base to secure it. Water the plant well.

The herbs shown in this bale are ready for harvesting!

Use this hay bale planting method for most kinds of plants with the exception of indeterminate tomatoes and corn, which both grow so large they can rip apart a hay bale. Because plants receive less nutrition from a hay bale than they do from the soil, it is important to water and fertilize plants regularly. Do not allow the hay bale to dry out, and fertilize at least once a week.



The red radishes are ready for the picking. Very healthy plants.