

How we built a hugelkultur bed with hand tools in three days.

A hugelbed (as we call it) is basically wood logs, wood chips, branches, fungi, manure, compost and dirt piled up in a long mound and then used to plant vegetables, trees, bushes, etc. It is meant to be a permanent bed with compost/manure added to it every year.

Most rotted wood logs work well but it is important to check the list of allelopathic trees at <http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/service/library/index.php3?docID=160> , so that those that might affect plant growth can be avoided . It is important to pay attention to what part/parts of the tree are allelopathic and then make a judgment as to whether to use them in a hugelbed. Some woods, like cedar, take a long time to break down.

There are many good sites online to find out how to build a hugelkultur bed. One of my favorites is <http://www.richsoil.com/hugelkultur/>

This article will show how we did it through pictures and commentary.



We decided to build the bed starting below ground level to enhance the hugelbed's water retention capabilities.

Jack dug about 2 feet down by the length and width of the log .







Once the log was in the hole,

Paper was stuffed along the outside. We saved all our packing from shipments for this purpose.

Then chunks of wood were added.



The wood ash, branches, rotted wood with fungus/mushrooms and leaves were brought over.







was added



to the growing bed.



Along with rabbit poop, straw and compost.



Finally the dirt that had been dug out for the hole was added on top and





Voila! The north end of our hugelbed was complete.

We then went to work on the two arms that were to form the east and west ends.



We completed the west arm and the east arm has all but the manure/compost/dirt.

To keep the dirt from falling away from the mound as it is added, a branch was placed at the base.



As dirt was added, the top of the mound was

scraped flat. This allowed for a slow build up on the top.

The dirt was then tamped down around the limb after the top was scraped.







When the mound was almost up as high as we wanted it, the branch was moved to the other side, the top was scraped and a ridge was formed so the dirt wouldn't run off the branch-less side.

The beds were built up and the branch was ready to be removed.



Cardboard is laid down, holes dug for the plum trees (to be transplanted later), and dirt is laid on top of cardboard.

Pretty much finished (more rocks will line inside for heat cache). The bed has been rained on twice (once heavily) and is holding its own. We have planted the north end with some cool weather above ground plants and will plant more later.

We feel that the best time to build a hugelbed is in the fall with a cover crop to overwinter before planting in the spring. Since we didn't want to wait that long we will see how this season's plants do.

