

Growing_Taters_In_Tires_2004.txt

From: "Jon"
Date: Wed Feb 25, 2004 1:19 am
Subject: Re: plexiglass-&-tire gardening

<LadyHawk wrote:

Jon could you tell me more on what you treat your tires with to plant in? I tried it last year trying the stacking method with potatoes but it didn't work does it need to be in full sun light? Thanks I'm going to pick your brain!

I don't know what state or zone you are in: so I will tell you what I do in Kentucky zone 6:

Depending on the size of the tire/s, I first wash them. If they are small enough for me to get them in my pickup truck, I'll take them to a car wash and wash them under pressure with soap then rinse with water. Inside the tire and outside as well, making sure the tread is free from road grime and grit.

That done, I bring them back to the cabin and decide where I'll sit the tire/s.

Let's presume it's now: Feb. 25th., 2004. Even though I've already planted 4 big tires with potatoes, and have one large potato bed planted covered with leaves: I'd sit the tire away from the prevailing winds, which, here, would be on the south west corner of the cabin, using the cabin as the wind break.

Make sure the spot you select will be free of most foot traffic and out of the way of the cabin's activities for as the weather warms, if your home is like my cabin, there's much action outside as the temps rise.

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Press down any taller growth such as clover or grass, and lay a thick mat of saturated newspapers over the grass. Over this put down 2 layers of cardboard: one long ways, the other cross ways: you can cut the cardboard away AFTER you position the tire/s on top the cardboard. The newspaper soon melts into the soil, but the cardboard hangs around for awhile, giving added protection against weed and grass that would come up into the tire, and also protect the tender plants from things such as voles.

Whether or not you trim away the rim of the top tire is your decision. Some tires I do trim, others I do not. The bigger the tire is the more likely I am to trim away the sidewall up to its tread.

I'd give the tire/s a slight tilt so sun will hit directly into the tires center. Wet the cardboard down really good then start stuffing newspapers, leaves, straw, corncobs, sawdust or whatever you have that will absorb moisture into the inner rim of the tire/s so when rains come, the organic material will take up the excess moisture and hold it til the plants need it the most: moisture will "wick" away from the inner rim into the main tire container area, keeping the roots thirst saited.

Once the rim is packed with such materials you have on hand or can obtain at no cost to you or for little cost, crumble your topsoil, potting soil (how-to make your own potting soil recipe is in OHG'S files) and cover the cardboard with 3 or soil inches of this mixture, then seat your potato seed into that mixture.

I always add a dusting of hardwood ashes I've kept from the wood stove over the potatoes. Potash is very good for root crops.

Once your potatoes are in place, dusted with wood ash, cover with a layer (not pressed down) of wheat straw, shredded newspapers,

compost, or whatever mulch you'll be using, then cover the top hole with a piece of glass, Plexiglas, or you can rig clear plastic over the top if you have nothing else to use. Glass and/or Plexiglas is ever so much easier on you the gardener, than using the plastic cover is. Because the bed must be watered weekly unless rainfall measures 1-inch. You never want the soil to dry out, and potatoes (sweet and Irish) need much water to return you a sizeable crop.

Irish potatoes need only 4-inches of top growth. When you tater vines/plants reach 6-inches tall, it's time to add a 2-inch layer of mulch, and snug it up around the potato plant stems. When it's time, add another tire on top of the first one. And just keep adding mulch, water, and tires until the stack grows 5-6 tires tall. You may need to drive a wooden stay on 2 or 3 sides of the tires so they won't blow over when storms come, or when you brush against them, or dogs hit them while chasing a ball, or.....

Once night temps no longer offer a chance of frost, you can omit the glass top: if you have predators who might eat the tater vine, you can use an old storm window SCREEN instead of the glass top. And when the temps get around or above 80 degrees, put a layer of newspaper around the upper edge of the topmost tire: this deflects heat away from the tire and preserves inner moisture as well.

The first blooms that form, I pinch off. This pours more growth to the roots which is what'll you'll harvest anyhow. The 2nd set of blooms, I allow to form and soon after the vines will begin to dry and become mulch. You can "dig" your taters by removing one tire at a time.

If you'll prepare another tire spot before unloading your tater tire, as soon as you remove one tire, you can roll it over on top of the cardboard spot you've just made beside your tater tire, and by the time your potatoes are all lying out on the ground, you'll have

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another tater tower built ready to plant into again to make another
crop of late fall taters to harvest just before a hard freeze hits
your area...depending, of course, on just what area that is.

Hope that helps.

Jon