

Clay\_Based\_Soil\_2004.txt

Date: 2/6/2003 8:31:21 AM Eastern Standard Time

From: (Lynne)

I've been lurking for a while and have found this list definitely interesting and informative<me admit I have learned something ,sure, right really >/ But I find myself with a series of questions . Guess I better start out asking question number 1. Does anyone have any bright ideas on improving a "clay "based type of backyard, near my house where I have started a garden and small herb agarden. The herbs seem to do sorta all right. Tomatoes sorta do all right, not great but never get over 2 feet tall. green peppers ditto . this house used to have a coal stove and they threw the ashes out into the back.<seen evidence of that>. I did for 2 years cover that area with dried leaves and then till them u;nder in the spring<which WILL, as usual, be here by middle of March Yay!!!. haven't really noticed much imnprovement.

Again, does anyone have ANY great ideas on improving the soil that I am trying to use.

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Date: 2/6/2003 10:12:31 AM Eastern Standard Time

From: (Cynthia)

Dig in some wood chips..not the nice mulch stuff, that's expensive. The coarse free stuff dumped by yard companies and the city. It will decompose slowly, and help to keep the soil from compacting. Leaves leaves and more leaves are a great amend ment EVERY year. Don't stop. It takes quite a bit to actually improve bad soil, but very they are invaluable in keeping soil good once you've acheived it. Cover crops can add TONS of humus. Buckwheat, Oats, Pease, Sudan Grass, clover, vetch, daikon radish, Alfalfa, rye...all these can be planted, tilled or cut down when they are about to flower, and planted again. After one year of using cover crops, you should have PLENTY of tilth. Then just minor upkeep every year, adding compost, leaves, etc...should do just fine. The more rotting organic matter in the soil, the more worms will come. The more worms, the more

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nutrition and good drainage you will have.

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Date: 2/6/2003 3:46:04 PM Eastern Standard Time

From: (Lynne)

Thanks a mint so to speak. At this point in time I needed the advice to also "lighten" up the clayish soil. Still can't get used to the reddness of it. In time though will..... The lady across the street and I are going to also try doing a garden next to her house. Hers isn't as old as this house (built in the mid 1920s) so hopefully won't have all that coal ash in it.

Again thanks for the advice.

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Date: 2/7/2003 4:43:55 PM Eastern Standard Time

From: (Cynthia)

You might try planting a nice under cover cover crop...like a nice low clover...white clover, for instance. You can plant your other plants right in with it. Red clover is really good for tons of humus, too. Mowing is a very good idea, some of the plants will die back if mowed, but that's all right, you can just plant right in the shredded stuff and go again. What you might want to do is plow up a larger area than you intend to plant. Work in some wood chips at the same time. Then plant the whole area in cover crops. Mow it down and plant half of it in cover crops AGAIN, while the rest gets planted with your garden. Keep the one half in cover crops, rotating them to get the best variety of nutrients in the soil, and then next year plant THAT side of the garden, while improving the first side. Also, some plants like peas, daikon radish, tyfon, etc...are cover crops which improve the soil at the same time as producing food. So you can just harvest them, then mow them down, and replant

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