



No-Tilling the First Seeds of the Season

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Jessica's tomatoes grew healthy and bright using the no-till method last season. She's going no-till again this year. I'm getting antsy. Spring is almost officially here which means that very, very soon there will be dirt under my nails.

As much as I like the winter rest, there is nothing better than planting the first seeds of the season.

I'm going to be growing most of my vegetable garden using the no-till method this year. I tried it in about a quarter of the garden last season and had great success, so I'm going all the way this time.

Basically, instead of turning or tilling the garden soil each spring, I pile several inches of good organic matter on top and plant my crops directly in it.

Last year I put three inches of compost on all the beds then turned it in, but this year I'm going to add two to three inches of leaf mold (well rotted leaves) and just plant away.

The only trouble I had last year was sowing the small early seeds of lettuce, radish and the like.

I feel like they 'need' fine, crumbly, newly-tilled soil so they don't get lost in the shuffle, but a no-till zealot gardening friend of mine, swears that that's not the case. He says he has had no problems with tiny seeds in about 5 years of doing no-till methods, so I'm going for it this year.

The portion of last year's garden that was no-till had my tomatoes, basil, peppers and a few flowers in it and they did just great. In fact, everyone else around here complained about getting early blight on their tomatoes but there was nary a spotted leaf in my garden.

My no-till zealot friend says it's because the blight spores are contained in the soil and since I had no exposed soil, they couldn't splash up on the leaves. Makes sense to me!