

Vegetable Plot Planting Ingredients and Steps

(Notes submitted by Carrie D.)

1. **Remove all traces of Bermuda grass**, digging down 8 to 12 inches. Be sure to remove all underground root sections. You may have to follow the sections until you reach the end of each grass root. If you leave any root sections, they may re-sprout and you'll have to do this again. Least amount of fun, but very important.
2. **Mix expanded shale into the clay soil** by roto-tilling or forking it in. You want to mix this in with the native soil about 6 inches or as deep as possible. You don't need to mix this in with the compost so you may have to pile the bark mulch and/or compost to get it out of the way. The expanded shale will allow plant roots to have much needed air when the ground is super saturated, such as after a period of heavy rains. Note: do not work the clay soil when it is wet—you will end up with rocks instead of soil. Texas AgriLife suggests 1 to 2 inches covering the area and roto-tilling it into the top 6 inches of soil. This is a one-time operation: you will not need to do this again. Only roto-till once because roto-tilling can ruin your soil. If you have bare soil for any extended time, mulch it to protect the soil from drying winds and sunshine.
3. **Compost** can be added and lightly mixed into the soil at every planting. Add the amount needed to bring your soil level up to the top of the wooden raised beds. Add compost every time you plant. You can plant directly into the compost; it will not hurt the plants or seeds.
4. **Dried molasses:** Add a sprinkling over the compost to add food for the beneficial microbes in the soil. It is supplied by the garden and stored in the bin.
5. **Fertilizer** options include **Medina**, which is supplied by the Garden and stored in the bin. Add a sprinkling every 2 weeks during the growing season. Or you can purchase **Alfalfa Meal** as another good source of nitrogen that the plants will need to grow green leaves and stems.
6. I brought earthworm castings from my home worm bin. I spread a thin layer of the castings in with the compost, molasses and alfalfa meal. I mixed this into the soil/compost and then planted my onions. Note—I first piled the shredded mulch out of the way. Do not mix mulch in with the soil/compost.
7. If it looks like the 10 day weather forecast is going to be good, go ahead and plant seeds along with your winter greens, onions, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, etc. (early season).