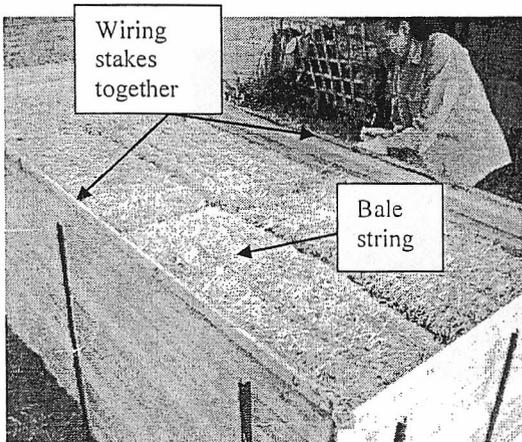


Straw Bale Raised Gardens with Corrugated Metal Sides

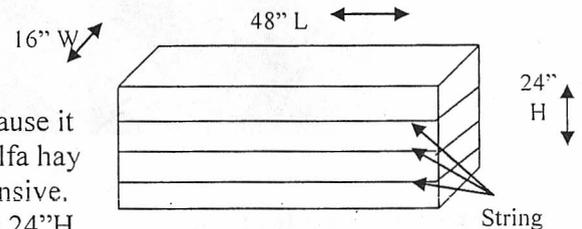
Creating a garden with straw bales is easy – just place bales in the garden location and surround the sides with some kind of impermeable, UV resistant, rigid material secured by stakes (this design uses metal roofing). Preferably, place the bales “cut side down” meaning the bale strings are on the *side* not the top (unlike the picture below) because it is easier for the water to penetrate. However, bales can be placed either way. These instructions are guidelines. Once you know the basic concept, you can be creative with what works for you.



Site: Place your garden where it will receive at least 6 hours of sun. If your garden will be rectangular, try to place it lengthwise on the east-west axis which means putting the short ends facing east and west. West facing structures get very hot in the summer so you'll want to minimize that area. If you can't orient it this way, paint the panels with white paint to reduce the heat gain. Level the area before placing the bales if necessary.

Materials:

Bales: Use oat or wheat straw (not barley straw because it might inhibit growth). Alfalfa hay works too but is more expensive.



Bale size varies slightly, but a 3-string bale is about 48”L x 16”W x 24”H and a 2-string bale is about 36”L x 14”W x 18”H. Do not take the wire or string off the bales.

Corrugated metal roofing: Heavy gauge, coated (if not coated, paint the inside of the panels with an exterior paint to protect the metal from corrosion). Length, height and quantity depend on the size of the garden and desired height. Leave 3” between the top of the panels and the top of the garden bed for mulch.

Circular saw: Cut the panels to length with a power saw with a metal cutting blade.

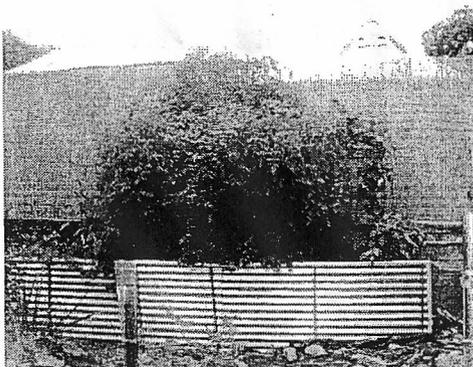
Supports: Sturdy “u” shaped fence stakes 4’ long. An example can be found in Home Depot (they are green). Space them about 3-4 feet apart on the outside of the panels. Heavy rebar also works.

Paint (optional): For the inside of the panels if the metal is not already coated. The panels will corrode quickly if there is any corrosion present.

Galvanized wire (optional): Rust-proof wire can be used to secure the corners and stakes across the bales (see above picture) to keep the stakes upright as the bales disintegrate. Banding around the entire bed can also be done. Periodically inspect the integrity of the wire.

Finishing Edges (optional): Edges can be finished off by securing a 90° metal edging on the corners of the planter to dress it up and to cover sharp edges.

Drill (optional): Drill through the panels for wiring the planter and to attach metal edging.



Garden Soil: Soil can be purchased from landscape material suppliers. A 3-way soil mix with approximately 60% topsoil, 30% mulch and 10% manure works well. Do not get just top soil (it is your local areas’ true top soil and most likely not for gardening). After the bales are put into place and the panels secured, fill the areas between the bales with loose straw and/or soil. If you need/want soil on top, wait to put it on until the bales are prepared as indicated on the reverse side of this sheet. As the bales disintegrate, add soil to keep the soil level at the desired height. As soil keeps being add, eventually the garden will become all soil.