



## Step #1: Stop digging.

Leave the soil as undisturbed as possible. The organisms that make up your underground workforce spend a lot of energy building a soil structure that helps both them and you. This sponge-like structure allows water to enter, then holds it in pore spaces for your plants' easy access. Any disturbance, such as tilling or digging, destroys this wonderful structure.

Without this structure, your soil will eventually become hard and compacted. Rainfall will run off your soil instead of seeping into it. The microscopic members of your underground workforce will shrivel up and disappear. Once this happens, you will have to keep adding more and more fertilizer and pesticides, just to replace the benefits your workforce would have provided free of charge.

Of course, in gardens, there will need to be some disturbance, such as digging a small hole to plant a seedling. But try to keep any disturbance to a minimum.

Here are some tips on how to practice **no-dig gardening**.

- **Use only minimum disturbance to seed or plant.** In many cases, you can spread seed on surface then cover with compost to desired depth. With seedlings, just make a hole big enough for the roots. Put the seedling in the hole, then fill with compost.
- **Don't pull your garden weeds,** just cut them off at soil level, then repeat as they grow back; they will eventually run out of energy and die, leaving their roots to enrich the soil.
- **Better yet, use mulches to prevent weed growth:** organic mulches (e.g., straw, cardboard, wood chips) will break down gradually and feed the soil organisms; inorganic mulches (e.g., crushed rock) will not break down, but will protect the soil (see Step # 4).

