

“Compartmented” Shed Makes Composting Easy

Why buy fertilizer for your garden if you can make it for free? Joseph Baril, Marlow, N.H., fertilizes his large flower and vegetable gardens at virtually no cost thanks to the “shed” system he came up with for making compost.

“I pick up dead grass and leaves from my yard in the fall and pile the material in the shed,” says Baril. “I also throw in kitchen waste, but no meat products or things that don’t degrade well such as peanut shells. It takes about 1 1/2 years to convert the material into a compost that is the best fertilizer money can buy.

“I used to keep piles of leaves, grass and pine needles out in the open, but snow and rain made them soggy and the ground around them got muddy. So I decided to build something that keeps everything dry and is more convenient to use.”

The shed measures 25 ft. long by 8 ft. wide and is made from structural steel tubing with a metal roof and cement floor. It’s divided into a series of 5-ft. wide bins made from

3/4-in. thick pressure-treated plywood and fitted with swing-out doors. The area between the bins and roof is open on all 4 sides for ventilation.

Baril dumps material almost daily into one of the bins. If the material is too dry, he wets it down by activating a sprinkler head located above the bin. As the bin fills, he uses his loader tractor to turn the material over every 5 days or so for 6 months. Then he uses his loader tractor to move the material to the next bin, and begins to throw fresh waste in the empty one.

“I keep turning the material over and moving it into the next bin every 6 months or so until it turns into compost,” says Baril. “The more I turn over the material, the faster it decomposes. At one point the material in one bin will be ready to use, while the other two will be at raw and intermediate stages.”

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Joseph Baril’s 25-ft. long compost shed is divided into a series of 5-ft. wide bins fitted with swing-out doors. Baril dumps material almost daily into one of the bins.



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4-Row Earthway Planter

Steve Adams ganged 4 Earthway seeders into a single 4-row unit for seeding and transplanting. It provided a big boost in productivity for Adams and his wife, Gretel, who raise and sell fresh flowers at Sunny Meadows Flower Farm, Columbus, Ohio.

“I was planting sunflowers in 300-ft. beds with 4 rows per bed for about 48,000 row feet of sunflowers in total,” recalls Adams. “That meant walking each bed 4 times. I had one seeder and was given another when I realized that for a few hundred dollars, I could cut out 3 trips on each bed.”

Adams bought the 2 additional Earthways he needed. He removed the front and rear axles and replaced them with 4-ft. lengths of 3/8-in. all-thread rod. Pvc spacers gave him a consistent 10-in. space between rows. He then removed the handles, eliminating one and reattaching the other 3 so each handle spanned 2 machines. All 3 handles were then connected with a row-marker rod cut to fit.

“Ganging the seeders made them more stable,” adds Adams. “With one, if you hit a rock or hard clump of dirt, it jumps. With 4 together, that doesn’t happen.”

The couple wanted to move to cultivating with a tractor-mounted unit. The ganged seeder not only sped up planting, it left uniform spacing, making mechanical cultivation possible.

“Since ganging the seeders, I changed everything over to 4-row beds,” says Adams. “I use the ganged Earthway seeders to mark the beds for transplants.”

Finding low-cost alternatives like ganged seeders are just one reason the young couple have been able to create a full-time business growing fresh flowers. They currently farm about 7 acres of flowers. While old school growers tell them you can’t make money competing with imported flowers, they say they are doing fine. With heated hoop tunnels, they have fresh flowers from March to December.

They sell to local florists, grocery stores and directly to customers at farmers markets, as well as provide bouquets for offices. They also offer several options for wedding flowers, including bulk purchase and limited arrangement design to full design services.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup,



Steve Adams ganged 4 Earthway seeders into a single 4-row unit for seeding and transplanting.

Sunny Meadows Flower Farm, 3555 Watkins Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43232 (ph 614 361-5102 or 614 296-1637;

SunnyMeadowsFlowerFarm@gmail.com; www.oursunnymeadows.com).

“Ooze Tube” Boosts Tomato Harvest

Tomatoes thrive when irrigated with a steady drip of water, says Darrell Downey, whose 40-gal. “Ooze Tube” delivers a steady drip of water at the rate of about a gallon/day to each plant.

Downey first developed the Ooze Tube to wrap around trees. He adapted it for tomatoes (and other crops such as pumpkins and squash) when he started traveling for his job and wasn’t able to water his garden regularly.

The 8-ft. Ooze Tube is held in place with stakes at each end and has a hole at the top to fill with a water hose. Line up the 4 drip lines at the base of 4 tomato plants. The tube holds enough water for about 10 days but, as plants grow, Downey recommends adding water more regularly - every 7 days, then every 3 or 4 days - to increase the amount of pressure and water delivered to the plants.

“Use a heavy tomato staking system and not cheap tomato cages,” he emphasizes. “The plants will grow 4 to 5 times more tomatoes than when watered by hand.”

Fertilizer can also be added to the water, and he recommends adding calcium to the soil around the plants to prevent blossom-end rot.

The UV-resistant Ooze Tubes will last several seasons and can be repaired with duct



The 8-ft. long “Ooze Tube” delivers a steady drip of water at the rate of about a gallon per day to each tomato plant.

tape or plastic patches. The tomato watering kits are available for about \$24 through Downey’s website or through many local garden equipment supply catalogs.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Engineered Watering Solutions, 71 Confederate Ave., Jasper, Ga. 30143 (ph 800 951-8123; www.oozetube.com).



To make fertilizer from weeds Brad Miller fills a container 3/4 full of plant material, then adds water, puts on the lid, and lets the mixture sit for 10 to 14 days to ferment.

Liquid Fertilizer Made Out Of Weeds

“I’m always looking for ways to make use of materials that most people consider waste,” says Brad Miller, Ridgeville Corners, Ohio, who recently started making garden fertilizer out of weeds.

After reading an interesting book published in 1950 titled Weeds - Guardians Of The Soil by Joseph A. Cocannouer, Miller came to the conclusion that weeds can be used for many beneficial things, one of which is fertilizer. Some people put weeds in their compost pile which is okay, but you still have to contend with the weed seeds which are hard to kill. “What I do is make a liquid fertilizer that’s

better than anything I’ve used before. The process is simple and quick.”

Take any kind of container that will hold water and fill it 3/4 full with plant material. Fill with water. Put on lid and let sit for 10 to 14 days to ferment. This “weed tea” will be super concentrated and should be diluted at the rate of 1 part weed juice to 10 parts water. Apply to garden. Be sure to use soon after fermenting because it will not store well and will start to rot.”

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