

York/Poquoson Master Gardeners Learning Garden at the Poquoson Museum 968 Poquoson Avenue, Poquoson, VA

Straw Bale Gardening

- Straw Bale Gardening is simply a different type of container gardening.
- The main difference is that the container is the straw bale itself, the outside crust of the bale serves as the container.
- Once the straw inside the bale begins to decompose, the straw becomes "conditioned" and ready to plant.
- The step-by-step process of conditioning creates an extraordinarily productive, warm, moist and nutrient rich rooting environment for young seedlings.



See more at: <https://strawbalegardens.com/faqs/what-is-straw-bale-gardening/>

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

12 Day Conditioning Process for Your Straw Bales

Getting the straw bales conditioned is an essential part of the process and should be started approximately two weeks prior to the target planting date in your area.

Days 1, 3 and 5

- Spread 1/2 cup (4 ounces) of high nitrogen fertilizer evenly per bale. Sprinkle it all over the bale surface, side-to-side and end-to-end. Water the bales to push the fertilizer down and thoroughly saturate the straw.

Days 2, 4 and 6

- Water the bales thoroughly.

Days 7, 8 and 9

- Spread 1/4 cup (2 ounces) of high nitrogen fertilizer evenly per bale.
- Sprinkle it all over the bale surface, side-to-side and end-to-end.
- Water the bales to push the fertilizer down and thoroughly saturate the straw.

Day 10

- Spread 1 cup (8 ounces) of general 10-10-10 fertilizer evenly per bale.
- Sprinkle it all over the bale surface, side-to-side and end-to-end.
- Water the bales to push the fertilizer down and thoroughly saturate the straw.

Days 11 and 12

- Water thoroughly and your bale(s) should be ready to plant. Confirm this by sticking your hand in the straw. It should not be any warmer than body temperature.

Planting Your Bales

- Seeds - If you want to plant seeds first, just spread about 1-2" of sterile potting soil along the top side of the bale(s). Then you plant your seeds in that soil just as you would in a traditional garden. Cover the seeds with a light dusting of soil or peat moss and water in well
- Transplants - Plant them just like you would if they were in the ground. If it says to plant 18 inches apart, then that is the same for the bale.



Days 1, 3 and 5 – High Nitrogen Fertilizer
Sprinkle Fertilizer & Water to Saturate Bales



Days 2, 4 and 6
Water Thoroughly to Saturate Bales



Days 7, 8 and 9 – High Nitrogen Fertilizer
Sprinkle Fertilizer & Water to Saturate Bales



Day 10 – 10-10-10 Fertilizer
Sprinkle Fertilizer & Water to Saturate Bales



Days 11 and 12
Water Bales and You Can Check Bale Temp



Planting Your Bales
Seeds Transplants

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

 **Virginia
Cooperative
Extension**

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

www.ext.vt.edu