



**“ Sheet Mulching Like A Boss: The Non-Fattening Way To Make Lasagna ”**

**David The Good**

**\*FULL TRANSCRIPT\***

**Hosted By Marjory Wildcraft**  
**[www.TheGrowNetwork.com](http://www.TheGrowNetwork.com)**

## NOTICE

You do not have the right to reprint or resell this transcript.  
You may not give away, sell, or share the content herein.

© 2019 Copyright The Grow Network / Grow Your Own Groceries.

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.** No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form whatsoever, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any informational storage or retrieval system without the express written, dated, and signed permission from the author.

**DISCLAIMER AND/OR LEGAL NOTICES:** The information presented herein represents the view of the author as of the date of publication. The author reserves the right to alter and update his/her views for any reason and at any time. This report is for study and discussion purposes only. While every attempt has been made to verify the information provided in this report, neither the author nor his affiliates/partners assume any responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, or omissions. Any slights of people or organizations are unintentional. If advice concerning legal or related matters is needed, the services of a fully qualified professional should be sought. This report is not intended for use as a source of legal or accounting advice. You should be aware of any laws that govern business transactions or other business practices in your country and state.

# **“ Sheet Mulching Like A Boss: The Non-Fattening Way To Make Lasagna ”**

## **David The Good**

Marjory: Hello and welcome to the Homegrown Food Summit. This is Marjory Wildcraft, your host, and this summit is brought to you by The Grow Network, which is the premier community of people who are growing our own food and making our own medicine. And you know what? We're becoming extraordinarily healthy and building a lot of resiliency in our communities.

Now different styles of gardening is actually how this whole summit got started and I always love to show different ways to grow foods, different strokes for different folks. And our next presentation is going to be on lasagna gardening and I have to say, I love David the good, he's always got this incredible sense of humor and that sheet mulching like a boss the non fattening way to make lasagna is a fantastic topic.

Let me tell you a little bit about David, he is the author of multiple gardening books including Compost Everything: The Good Guide to Extreme Composting, Totally Easy Crazy Florida Composting, and The Good Guide to Survival Gardening. His latest novel which is Turned Earth and it's a Jack Broccoli novel, it's like adventure gardening, I'm totally into that one. I just read it and did a review of it up on the Grow Network blog. David has so much going on, he also has a YouTube channel, he has a blog at the [survivalgardener.com](http://survivalgardener.com), and he frequently hosts a podcast here at The Grow Network and we consider David a key part of one of our contributing experts of folks that really are a big part of The Grow Network.

Now I have to say on this one, David always makes me smile and I especially love that t-shirt that he's wearing. You gotta watch that one right in the beginning. And I will say in the beginning this does go a little bit slowly as David is gathering all of the materials to make this lasagna garden and I kind of wish he had speeded that up but

also it really is quite truthful of the work that's involved in gathering the materials. But he just totally makes this totally fertile ground out of entirely scavenged materials, zero money, and just very simply does it. And I think that this presentation is actually a very good complement to the interview that I did with Paul Gauty who is also on the summit here. The best part of this is at the end where David tells the stories of different gardening stories he has and listening to an experienced gardener talk about the things that worked and didn't work is worth its weight in gold.

Here's David the good, watch this wonderful presentation on how to do lasagna gardening.

David: Welcome. I'm David The Good. Today we're going to do something that's really fun and hopefully somewhat entertaining. What if I told you there was a method of growing food that combined gardening and composting while eliminating weeding? There is and it doesn't require miles of pipe, or space aged lighting, or doing anything indoors, or trying to keep fish alive. No, this is an old tried and true method which is fantastically fun. It's just I've got to go get some stuff first and then I'll show you what we're gonna do.

Live in sea anemones. Live in sea anemones. I'm a clown fish MC, clown fish anemone. Clown fish.

Got my sheep in the tall grass chewing. Because I'm a little shepherd and I know what I'm doing. Got my sheep in the tall grass chewing. Because I'm a little shepherd and I know what ...

After a day's work or what, eight minutes of screen time, I've now gathered materials, a huge amount of materials. We want to take some of this brushy area here and turn it into a garden bed. So what we have to do now is just knock it to the ground. We don't have to till it or anything. You just got to go through and knock it to the ground. Then we're going to start building a garden bed right up from the ground. So I'm gonna let my kids clear a piece of it because I don't really feel like it. I think I'll go take a nap and I'll be back in a few minutes or a few hours.

Now we've got a clear spot. So there's still a lot of weeds here. If we tried to plant crops right now, we would have trouble because there's a lot of persistent stuff here and some of it's perennials. Little bits of chunks all over the place that would come right back up. So what we have to do is put down a weed block. I'm not a fan of plastic and I don't have a flame thrower so we're gonna use something that we got out of a dumpster. We are gonna block the weeds organic and naturally, organically and natural.

Take this, throw it down where we want our garden bed. This one had staples in it. You can see I ripped out the staples, all these little chunks. I don't really want to have staples in my garden. It's a little more plastic on here. I'll just take it off. I want to get in the garden as much as I can, but I don't care that much. Eventually actually, what happens is the won't break down and later on you end up pulling it out of your garden.

You should see how many pieces of plastic and bottles and stuff are in the soil right here. This used to basically be a dump. Gonna make a nice little bed. It's okay if it's doubled over, tripled over. If you have a hard perennial problem like Bermuda grass, Bermuda grass was my enemy back when I lived in Tennessee. My back lawn was Bermuda grass and I did gardens right into where the lawn was.

Man alive. That Bermuda grass, it has these underground stolons. They just travel, and they travel, and they travel. They get in your garden beds and they choke everything to death. So to deal with that, I put down a double layer of cardboard. Anyplace there's a gap, I overlapped it. If you wet the cardboard, it stays. I don't have any hose over here. I just have buckets. So I'll make it fall down a little bit. You can presoak your cardboard if you like, but that'll help hold it down so it doesn't blow all over.

Now with the help of some sheep, we've got a beautiful layer of [inaudible 00:11:57] sheep manure. I love this stuff. It doesn't really burn the gardens like some things do. It provides a lot of organic matter along with it. You can see there's a lot of grass in there. It

probably has a lot of weed seeds in it. So this is going down on the bottom.

Another thing I like to put on the bottom is rough material that I chopped down from around the yard like hedge prunings and leaves and that kind of stuff, things that I'm gonna pin down with further finer layers. Let's get some of that and throw it down here. I like to use the weeds to feed my crops. This is actually a nitrogen fixing tree known as lead tree or *leucaena leucocephala*. The alfalfa of the tropics its been called, and it is high in nitrogen. It's gonna rot down in here, be a nice little layer.

I love these things. They grow back and they're really good food for animals and they're really good food for your fir trees. A lot of times, I think people cut down everything in their yard and they burn the stumps. I actually wrote a post on my website not too long ago about not burning the stumps. If you've got something that seems like it's invasive and it keeps coming back, why don't you just keep cutting it and using it for compost? Don't get rid of it all the way. Use it for compost or feed animals with it.

You could chop these trees over and over again and look at that. That's gonna feed some food for me. I could take something that normally they say, "Oh *leucaena*, that's an invasive. What a pain in the neck." University of Florida does not like this plant. I turn it into a resource. Free nitrogen for the garden and some organic matter.

For my next trick, I will ply a layer of mostly carbon. This is dry grass. Green grass has more nitrogen but dry grass has a little more carbon. This is a dry brown layer. If you're familiar with your composting, you alternate your green and brown layers. We're basically making the compost pile garden here. So I picked this up for a good reason.

My next layer is a weird one. It's another green layer. You saw me picking these up. I've already put one layer of invasive plants down. Why not another? This here is the dreaded water hyacinth plant, which should be called the compost of the swamp. Maybe that's not catchy enough. Maybe water hyacinth is catchier. But this stuff, it's

an aquatic plant, right? It's invasive inside of waterways. When it gets out of the waterway, it dies. It dries out, it dies.

So what some enterprising gardeners have discovered is that this stuff is like putting fertilizer on your garden beds. It's almost an instant compost that's full of water. It rots down very quickly and becomes pretty much a liquid fertilizer. Really good for starting your compost heap, really good for adding as a green layer in a compost pile. You can even feed it to cows but you can get tons of it. It's really a big problem inside of waterways because it spreads and reproduces very quickly.

What I used to have were a couple of little ponds, which were made out of old hot tubs. I took water plants like these and I would just let them cover the entire surface of the pond and then I would scoop them out and use them as a compost in my gardens. Now you saw me pulling these things out of that drainage trench. I'm friends with the folks that own that place and they said I could help myself. So there's our next green layer.

I think I'm gonna throw in some more green along with that. Fortunately, we've got some seaweed. The seaweed we picked up this time is not the prettiest seaweed in the world. It's not the stuff I really like, the sargassum weed. Or man, if you live where there's kelp, kelp is awesome fertilizer for your garden. But it's still seaweed, it's still got the minerals of the ocean in it.

And yeah, I know you're supposed to rinse it out first. That's what everybody says, but I've been doing tests over time and I've discovered that if you just put a little bit of seaweed in even with the salt in it, it's not a big deal. Plants grow anyways. They don't seem to mind it. A little bit of salt has been known to give tomatoes more flavor. So I'm kind of pushing the limits and seeing what happened.

I put a solid seaweed mulch on one garden bed and that didn't work very well with peppers, but the tomatoes did okay. Then I've done lasagna gardening or sheet composting like this and I've just put it in as a layer and it doesn't seem to matter. But if you're worried about

it, just rinse the seaweed before you throw it down. Then you know that you've rinsed some of the salt out of it.

But I figure seaweed has got all of these sea minerals in it. So does the salt. So I want a little of that in my garden. I'm okay with that so long as the plants don't die. Seaweed is really loaded with nutrients from all over the place, all over the ocean. If you think of all the erosion that takes place at the rivers going down to the ocean, running over all of this mineral structure, and then they go into the ocean and the ocean just becomes this place of incredible mineralization.

There's a lot of minerals in the water so now we're adding them right into our gardens and they'll stick around in your soil particularly if you compost instead of just eating everything and then never composting any of the scraps. You'll keep recycling the minerals of the ocean back into your piles.

Got some more grass. If you live in a place that has the season called fall, which I don't because I live in the tropics, but if you live a place with fall leaves, I used to live in a place with fall leaves. I lived in Tennessee. I would save all of the leaves that were thrown by the side of the road and use them in all my compost piles and I would stack them up just like this.

I would put down cardboard and then I would throw leaves all over the cardboard. Then I would throw some mulch or whatever else or wet them real good to hold everything down so through the winter they wouldn't all blow away into my neighbor's yard again, which would not make me very popular. Then I would have this constant repository of carboniferous materials that I could mix into my piles too.

I had all these bags and bags of leaves so anytime I got some sloppy kitchen scraps, I had some leaves to throw over the top of them. Or I would actually just mix the kitchen scraps right into the garden when the ground wasn't frozen and let it compost down right there. I'm gonna throw a little more seaweed on there. If you've got it, you

might as well throw it, and it'll help hold this grass down. Then we'll water this thing really well.

If you wanted to get fancy, you could put some borders on. Just get yourself some logs or some blocks or bricks or whatever. I tend to scavenge materials because I don't like to spend money on wood and that sort of thing. We've got all this ground we can use. I don't know if you've got trees for free, falling rotting wood all over the place, might as well throw that out of the boundaries. I know it's not been treated with anything weird. It's just trees.

If you want to put boundaries down, you can do that and actually just overlap them on the edges of the cardboard so they're holding your weed block down. I've done some really beautiful beds that way. I once did a mosaic garden bed that was a raised bed where we took cinder blocks that were the solid concrete type and then the kids and I and my wife spent an afternoon and made little mosaics all over them and then grouted them and made them the boundary for a bed, which looked really cool.

It's kind of time intensive though and I was hoping Martha Stewart was gonna call and she never did. So I haven't done it sense. Okay. For the icing on the cake, I'm going to use a mulch. This is called bagasse, which is the remnants of sugarcane after the cane has been pressed. This is nice stuff. It rots down really well, feeds the fungi, keeps the moisture in, and you can pick it up for free at rum distilleries if you're lucky enough to be near one of those.

You don't want to be too near because the smell of the rotting sugar cane outside is incredible. But other than that, this is a really great mulch, which I love. And you can use whatever you want for a top layer of mulch, really any kind of a brown material. The idea is you don't want anything that could be potentially weedy to be on top. So this is really good because it's just shredded sugarcane. Sugarcane's not gonna come back and it doesn't have any seeds so there's nothing to worry about there.

But if you've got tree company mulch like when they clear the power lines in your neighborhood, yeah, that's great stuff. Use that. You've got some grass from your lawn, that works too. So now we have a bed. This is some sopping wet almost finished compost, which I'm going to use. It's not perfect but man, there's so much trash. There's always trash in everything. It's not perfect but it's close enough to be in soil for my liking. The plants aren't gonna care.

Just had a bin over here that got filled full of water and so it's definitely a little sloppy. At this point, if we had built this bed in the fall, we could simply just set up something like this, you know the end of summer, the fall, and let it rot down. Then depending on how cold winter is, it's gonna slowly deteriorate down. Then in the spring, it's really gonna start to rot and make some activity. Then you're gonna have a perfect spot to plant when your growing season comes around.

So a great time to do it is in the fall and you're just going to leave it in that case. You just got your little mound on the ground and it's gonna rot down. It'll be like an in place cold composting thing and the weeds are not gonna come through it. You can just go ahead and plant it and plant right into it in the spring. But I want to start right now for the purposes of this demonstration, so I'm going dig little holes down to the cardboard layer and I can actually punch a hole in the cardboard.

Then I'll stick a little bit of compost right in the hole. Oh, look at that. That's so beautiful. Then this right here, called Cuban oregano, it is a perennial oregano you start from cuttings. All I got to do is stick a piece right there and voila, there's a beautiful little plant that is not gonna be fighting with weeds. All these different layers here, seaweed and down to the cardboard layer.

You don't necessarily have to punch through the cardboard layer if you don't want to. It's gonna actually get soft in there and rot. Some plants may not be able to make their way through it. So if you're worried about it, go ahead and do it. I'm not that worried because

this is actually a foot of material here. I live in the tropics and everything breaks down really fast.

That is gonna root right there. If I want to, I can just mulch right around it. That way if there's any seeds left in that compost, they're not gonna pop up as easily either because the bagasse is gonna exclude the light. There we go. Here's another plant that starts from cuttings. This is one of my very favorite tropical plants. It's actually a hibiscus. This is abelmoschus manihot, the edible leaf hibiscus.

It's almost just like spinach or lettuce. It's really good, tender right off the plant, and it doesn't have all the fibers that a lot of the hibiscus do. It starts nicely from cuttings. What I'm gonna do is I'm gonna use this one and stick it right in the middle right there once I give it a little bit of compost. I'm sorry for my chewing. If my grandmother saw me making this video and chewing on camera she would be like, "David." But she's not with us anymore. I still remember though, even if I don't obey. I'm sorry, grandma.

There we go. Oh yeah. Now this will be an experiment. Chances are, what's gonna happen is all the leaves are gonna wilt and it's gonna look like it's dead. This happens with a lot of plants. If you've ever planted sweet potatoes, you can just take pieces of the vine, stick them in the ground, and you think, that thing's dead. It just all is wilted. Then a few days later, it comes back and it starts growing. I think that's what this is gonna do. They seem to root very easily, but gardening's all about experimentation. So we'll see how it does.

I know the oregano is gonna do it. The Cuban oregano is gonna do it. This one, I don't know. We just have to stay tuned. Maybe at next year's summit you'll find out if it lived. Since I mentioned sweet potatoes and because this is just a demonstration garden, I figure you know what? I'll just show you guys how to do it. I have some pieces here. These are called sweet potato slips. These are pieces of sweet potato vine.

If you start a sweet potato on your counter and you let the vines grow out of it, you can actually just keep breaking them off when

they get about that big and just stick them in the ground. Every time you do that, you will grow a new sweet potato plant. You can actually get 20 or 30 sometimes from one sweet potato. Sometimes what I would do is just take a pot and put some dirt in it and bury a couple of sweet potatoes.

Every time new vines came up and they got about that long, I would just take pieces off and go stick them in the garden. Really helps if you have a warm spot that you can do that in if you have a cold climate and just start those little vines because this is all you need to plant sweet potatoes. You don't have to have anybody root them for you, you don't have to buy slips. Get some sweet potatoes, stick the vines in the ground.

So there we go. What I do is I nip off these few and I've got these slips here with the ends. We'll just make a little hole here. Put in some compost. Stick a couple of these in here. Let them fight. There we go. One is probably good enough but I've seen local farmers sticking two in a hole. So one more test. I'm demonstrating how to do the composting gardens, the lasagna gardens, but I can't stop experimenting. It's one of those things.

It's not a difficult method. It makes a beautiful bed in a short period of time. You're composting, you are gardening and planting, and you're keeping the weeds from coming in all at the same time. So it's really a sweet method. This idea is not a brand new idea. It goes back, I'm sure, thousands of years. But in recent time, I would say it probably became popular as a sheet composting method called deep mulch gardening, which was Ruth Stout's method.

Ruth Stout was a spunky older lady who wrote these exuberant columns about her amazing gardens, which she did by just piling up straw on the ground. Every time the weeds showed up, she just piled more straw in the ground, and more straw, and more straw, and more straw. So she kept the gardens from ever becoming out of control with weeds by just crushing stuff. She called it her no work gardening or lazy gardening.

Then later on in 1998, I believe it was, Patricia Lanza wrote a book called Lasagna Gardening. Lasagna gardening was a more complicated method. That's what we're doing here. Same idea. You're basically doing a deep mulch system and letting it rot down in compost. But you're putting layers in so you're kind of doing it more like a compost pile. We've got greens and browns and you can throw just about anything into it.

You can throw in your kitchen scraps, you can throw in your grass clippings, you can throw in your hedge trimmings on the bottom and autumn leaves and seaweed. You could probably throw in some oyster shell. You could throw in some crushed coals, charcoal like to be a bio char layer. You could put in the litter from the bottom of your chicken coop. You could put in your rabbit manure.

Whatever you want, you just pile it all up and you know all that stuff is good for the plants. So you pile it all up, poke little holes in. You got your cardboard on the bottom, block of leaves, and something brown on top to hold all these layers together and you get a lasagna garden. More recently, the same kind of an idea in a more simple form is Paul Gautschi's Back To Eden gardening. I'm actually sending him a copy of my book this week.

So compost everything. Paul Gautschi's been doing that for a long time. He just throws the stuff on the ground. He gets a bunch of wood chips and he gets some compost. He just piles it up, and piles it up, and piles it up. Over time, the fungi and the bacteria and the worms and all the moisture that comes in, it becomes this really rich patch of ground that grows really well. You can make it as complicated or as simple as you like. The main thing is, throw organic matter on the ground and plant into it.

So long as you've got something to block the weeds down in the bottom so the horrible stuff doesn't come up, the worms are gonna move in and up and down over time. They'll loosen the ground underneath. When I did this in Tennessee clay, the clay was hard and rocky and horrible. It had been scraped and it used to be a driveway, I believe. So it was just horrible for gardening.

So I piled up a foot of wood chips and some compost, and some leaves, and some straw, and whatever we had around. I just piled it on in the fall and I let it rot down. The next spring when I went to go plant into it, to my surprise, the ground underneath was actually getting light and crumbly. It was darkening up in color and becoming loamy whereas it had just been this really rocky stuff that would crack when it dried out in the summer. It actually became beautiful soil and it was stunning how much better it was.

This is the basics of doing a lasagna garden. I have a ton more composting stuff. There is a booklet that goes along with this presentation that I'm giving away for free and you can sign up for that. There's a little ad alongside. I've got all kinds of super easy composting methods you can check out. I want you to go and click on it and pick that up for free.

I spent a good bit of time putting it together and I want everybody to get it that can because I just want people to stop throwing stuff into landfills and stop wasting things. Stop dragging all of your brush to the side of the road for the company to haul away and throw into the dump. If you can learn how to do some of these simple composting methods, you could do way better.

With this method, there are a few risks I want to mention to you before we wrap this thing up. We live in a very toxic world. There is plastic in the ocean. There's plastics that are being dropped all over the place. There's stuff being sprayed into the air. There's pollutants everywhere. We know that there's all kinds of problems. Some of these things we just have to live with. Most of them we just have to live with because there's nothing much we can do about it.

We can clean our own act up but there's a lot of other stuff going on that we have no control over whatsoever. So in a garden like this, what you want to do is minimize the risk of your plants or yourself having any problems. But the most important thing, your plants are going to die if you make a mistake. That sounds like it's maybe hyperbole. If you don't water your plants, obviously they die. But if

you compost wrong, your plants will die, dead. You can actually kill the ground for years.

I try to warn people about this in all my books and my videos. There are persistent herbicides now in manure, and in some straw and hay, and sometimes in grass clippings and other things that will sit in the soil and they're very complex molecules and they do not compost well. I no longer bring in any manure from sources where I know that feed is coming in from any kind of industrial source. If they're buying in hay, I would not use any of that manure because the animals will actually eat the hay that's been sprayed to control certain broadly weeds so you get more grass.

So you grow hay and you spray to kill the weeds. The farmers are spraying this stuff called aminopyralids. It's the biggest one. It will get into the hay, the hay picks it up, the animals eat it, and it passes right through the animal's digestive tract into the manure. It can compost for months and months and months and not break down. You put it in your garden beds and all your plants will just start twisting and turning and looking sick.

Back when Ruth Stout was doing her no work method and she was throwing straw all over her garden beds, that's all well and good before the invention of some of these nasty things. So about in the last 10 to 12 years, we've seen a proliferation of these new herbicides that just last for a very long time and they can really completely wreck your garden.

I know because I got into garden writing after losing about \$1,000 worth of crops from my gardens because I got some manure from a farm and they had sprayed their fields the previous summer. It killed everything that I had in my spring gardens plus some of my perennial trees. Blackberries, mulberries. It got me ... Oh my goodness, you get sick when that sort of thing happens.

So when you gather materials, it's probably fine if you go gather seaweed at the beach. I'm not gonna worry about that. I know the sugarcane is cool and I know that the brush that I'm cutting down

here is good. I know where my compost came from. I know if I throw kitchen scraps in there it's fine. There's always gonna be a little bit of toxins in everything, maybe a little bit of glysohate in this and a little bit of CCM in that, but you really want to avoid those long-term herbicides.

The things you got to watch out for are bought compost. Sometimes these composting facilities do not have the filters. So if you want to get compost, you want to just buy the compost, don't trust it. Some of my friends back in Gainesville had a lot of soil that they bought for their gardens which had compost in it that destroyed their gardens all at once, one season. It's a terrible thing, but that's the way it is.

Avoid the horse manure, avoid cow manure, avoid hay and straw and you should be safe. Pretty much everything else ought to be fine but if it's in the grass family, there's a really good chance that it's been sprayed because the universities and the government are regularly recommending these aminopyralids to be sprayed to control [inaudible 00:38:39] So there you go. Anyhow, I just wanted to warn you. I hate to even have to put that in here.

I love a laissez-faire approach to gardening, but I got burned so badly by this stuff. I don't want the same thing to happen to you. So when you read about lasagna gardening or deep mulch gardening, remember that. Straw, hay, manure, purchased compost, I would just avoid it if I could and make my own from whatever kitchen scraps and whatever other materials I can scavenge that I'm sure is gonna be unsprayed and safe.

You don't have to be really serious about mixing up your green and brown layer, as we heard Ruth Stout used to just throw straw down. Paul Gautschi just throws down a little bit of compost and he throws down a bunch of tree company mulch, just shredded mulch material. You don't have to be super serious about it. Let's say you just have an area that you want to garden at some point in the future. You can take all the brush you find and just hack it into bits and throw it out there.

Here's two examples for you. My dad and I planted a food forest project down in south Florida some years ago. South Florida has sand that looks like beach sand. We're talking just dead gray white stuff with almost no organic matter in it, almost no soil life to speak of. It's just this dead sand. We were putting in some fruit trees and some perennials and I said, "Man, we've really got to do something about this soil."

But every time you throw compost on the ground there, because of how big those sand grains are and how hot it is in that tropical climate and the rains, it just burns through really fast. So I wanted some stuff that would stick around further. So down in Fort Lauderdale, they do this thing where they pick up all your yard waste and they give everybody these big green bins. You're supposed to dump all your palm fronds and your yard waste and your trimmings and all that stuff in them.

So what we did was we went around on trash day and we picked up all of these bins from all of the neighbors and we rolled them down to the backyard and we piled up two, three foot big mound of material on the ground. The neighbor next door who's a Cuban guy, he's standing over the fence with his cigarette watching us like, "What are you guys doing? What is this mess? I said, "Yeah Jose, we're gonna build the soil up." He's just like, "Made a big mess."

So anyhow, we piled it all up anyways. He just kind of shrugs and leaves us to do our gringo madness. I got this big mess and we've got trees in between that we planted all this rough material, big palm fronds. We even had chunks of schefflera trees and prunings and just this big pile of mess. It looks like somebody just backed a truck up from a landscape company and piled it in the backyard.

Well if you fast forward two to three months later, I went back and all that material, a lot of it had gone like this, had shrunk down to about half of what it was. I stuck my hands and I broke up some of the sticks and stuff, and I dug down into it. Underneath, there were all these little insects and worms and there was black soil, like actual

soil. The sand was converting into soil because it was becoming rich with organic matter and it was pulling up this dark sand.

Actually, the sand was all sandy and white over here and then it was kind of loamy. You could still see little grains of sand in it but it was this rich stuff. It looked like purchased compost underneath. Not only that, there were millipedes and all these worms and beetles and stuff. I'd be like, "Wow, there's so much life in here and all we did was just pile a bunch of junk on the ground."

So I have a photograph of a hand of sand out of the pathway, which is white, and then a hand of sand out of the middle of that in just a few months after. It's just black and beautiful and rich with organic matter. So that's story number one. Story number two, I had a north Florida food forest project and I had stuck some trees out in the yard. Now it's a great big area, so trying to do sheet mulching over a front yard like that, it's just a losing proposition.

I had to run around most of the day to get the materials for this little bed. So what I did was like okay, I'm just going to stick some trees in the ground. I'm gonna hope for the best. I stuck some peaches in the front yard. The front yard was kind of a patchy, wheaty, sandy, hot ground that had been mowed extensively, sprayed with a lot of chemicals over the years, and then we got it and we just let the grass grow.

So we had these little trees out there and they were not happy. Two years went by and those trees were still not happy. I thought, okay, I just have to find a way to get some material at least around them so they're rich and the soil can build up. I had just seen this thing in south Florida taking off and I said, "I'm gonna do the same thing up here."

So they were clearing the power lines in my neighborhood. These guys had their big trucks and they were shredding all this stuff. I said, "Hey, would you guys drop that in my yard?" The guy said, "Yeah, no problem." Then he forgot. Gone at the end of the day. Then I was like, oh no. So the next day, I go and I find him in another part of the

neighborhood. I said, "Look, I'll give you \$20 if you drop this in my yard, \$20 for lunch. I'll pay for your lunch." And he's like, "Oh yeah, no problem." So he dropped it by and I gave him \$20.

He goes, "You want some more?" Yes. So I ended up with like eight loads of material. Then I had some friends come over with a shredder and we chopped up a whole bunch of these giant sunflowers and sticks and things that I had thrown in the yard and we shredded those and we shot them all over the yard. Then I had a friend who had access to the produce dumpsters at a couple of grocery stores because she had an animal rescue.

She rescued tortoises and she rescued all kinds of strange animals. So she had access to all of this material coming out of the grocery stores and she just gave it to me. A lot of the stuff that she couldn't use, she had way more than her tortoises could eat. So I took all of this produce and I just dumped it in piles in the front yard. Then I started shoveling from the tree company mulch and covering over it.

Then I did things like stick in little sweet potatoes. I stuck in a few more perennials. I threw flower seeds around here and there, threw some compost around whenever I had it. Man alive, I tell you that mulch was the biggest part of it because that was what I had the most of. It was just big piles of it. The next year after I did it, it didn't do much the fall that I applied it, but the next year, all those trees put on three or four foot of growth. It was like they were like, thank you. The soil is finally alive.

And then I started to have mushrooms show up, like all kinds of different mushrooms because the fungi had moved in. The fungi digests and moves through the soil and transports nutrients and makes everything really rich and beautiful. I had earthworms. I could just dig anywhere and pull out worms. Then I had piles and piles of sweet potatoes because I just stuck in a few slips here and there. Anywhere was a little open piece of mulch, stick in a little sweet potato slip.

We pulled in tons of sweet potatoes. It was gorgeous and it's just because we threw a whole bunch of stuff on the ground. That's all you have to do. Check out the booklet in the link. It's free and it'll get you going in composting, get you thinking differently about organic matter.

Visit me on the web at [thesurvivalgardener.com](http://thesurvivalgardener.com). That's my regular website. You can read my articles at [thegrownetwork.com](http://thegrownetwork.com) where I post pretty regularly. And you can find me on YouTube, David The Good, and my books are on Amazon. Thank you for joining me. I hope this gave you some ideas and I really appreciate y'all being here. Until next time, may your thumbs always be green.

Cause I'm a little shepherd and I know what I'm doing. Looking more like a librarian than a gangster probably. See. Yeah.

Marjory: Okay, that's awesome. So there's that button on the right to connect up with David the good. I highly, highly, highly recommend his book, *The Jack Broccoli novel, Turned Earth*, if you're especially, you know, adventure gardening. We gotta get it. I felt really proud to be a gardener by the time I read that book. It was really fun. Click on that button to the right, David's got lots of stuff to get in touch with, funny, funny videos, lots of great articles and then of course down below that you can pick up the whole summit package which I hope you do, it really does support the work of the Grow Network. And then let's get together on another presentation. There's a whole bunch here.