



Keen workers: Landscaper Andrew Addenbrooke with (from left) Charlotte Hannabery, Fifi Oostenbroek, Finnbar Power and Sam Perrier.

Picture: Adam Armstrong

Encouraging little hands in garden

STARTING a garden need not break your budget or your back.

Andrew Addenbrooke, from Little Green Thumbs, said raised gardens were the answer to many gardeners' prayers, producing great tasting and cheap fruit and vegetables.

"With the cost of fruit and vegetables these days, it makes sense," said Mr Addenbrooke, who visits schools to teach children the benefits of gardening.

"The structure is above ground and can be filled with soil and organic matter that you choose, instead of working with the soil in the ground that may be of a lesser quality."

The height cuts out the need to bend down and work at ground level and no-dig gardens also look good.

"It adds a degree of aesthetics to a backyard as well as defining your edible garden area," he said.

He said a no-dig garden could be

bought in kit form, usually using panels that were easily assembled.

"If you are using timber, be careful of splinters and sharp edges, and be sure to line the inside with builder's plastic," he said.

This prevents any chemicals the timber may have been treated with from leaching into the soil.

After the bed is built, line the bottom with newspaper to stop grass growing through, then layer in the other ingredients.

"Use a good layer of sugar cane mulch on the bottom followed by a thick layer of organic garden soil," Mr Addenbrooke said.

"Repeat this process several times until it is nearly full. On the top layer, combine a mixture of both soil and mulch - well mixed - with a barrow-load of compost which can be your own home blend or bought."

The next step is to plant your seeds or seedlings.

"I am personally a big fan of companion planting," Mr Addenbrooke said.

"This is the process of growing a mixture of plants in an area that will assist each other in a variety of ways, including adding nutritional value, promoting growth and pest control.

"A great example of this is growing tomatoes and basil together."

Tomatoes are an easy plant to kick things off with, especially for young gardeners, and seedlings should be spaced about 80cm apart.

"Between the seedlings, plant basil to assist in the healthy growth of the tomato plant. This will, in turn, help the basil to thrive," Mr Addenbrooke said.

"Tomatoes love the sun so position your garden in an area that gets at least five hours each day.

"They also love a drink of water, but be sure not to overwater as this

YOUR GUIDE TO A NO-DIG GARDEN

STEP-BY-STEP

■ Create the structure using bricks, sleepers or logs one by one.

■ If building on grass, lay down newspapers to stop weeds growing.

■ Cover the garden with straw about 10cm thick.

■ Add organic fertiliser.

■ Add more straw with a mixture of compost and organic soil.

■ Plant your seedlings.

can be harmful to your crop. It is also advised that when watering, concentrate on the soil rather than the plant.

"Seaweed solution is a great source of nutrition for your tomato plants but be sure not to overdo it when they are young as it may delay the fruiting process.

"And finally, stake when they are still small so you don't disturb the root system as it gets older."

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