

God's Community Garden

At the Garden by Peggy Hanney

This year we are experimenting with straw bale gardening. We have a row of ten bales of straw. We had to dig holes in the straw to put our soil, which is a combination of compost, cow manure, potting soil and nitrogen fertilizer. This took two weeks before plants could be added. We added the plants and in a day or two had all kinds of mushrooms in the bales. Disaster had struck! We quickly removed as many as we could see. Our clothes were spotted with a black ink. Then the following day the mushrooms had reappeared. So, once again we destroyed the crop. A few days later our volunteer with the most knowledge about straw bale gardening returned from vacation and told us the mushrooms were a good sign that the soil was working properly and we did not need to remove them. We planted eggplant, squash, muskmelons and green peppers. Right away, something ate the melons so they were short lived. We planted kale and purple cabbage in their place.

The reason we decided to do this method of gardening was because our director, Linda Wood, had extra time to do research and became excited about the “no weeding, self composting” component. So we applied for a grant from Aquidneck Land Trust for this project. We had decided we were not going to get the grant, but we would put in a smaller amount of bales and if successful we would purchase a few more bales in the Fall. On May 24th we received a letter that our grant request had been honored. So now we will purchase 20 more bales this Fall. This will make it easier to dig holes in the top and sides so we can have complimentary plants growing in the same bale. Thanks to Aquidneck Land Trust, we will continue our experiment. Linda was right – we have yet to pull a weed from the straw! That is not the case in the rest of the garden.



