

Martian Zero-Dirt Soil Update 2022

It's been a few years since I initiated the bioreactor and compost engine at Mezzacello. Time for a year two update.

Care and Instructions for a Parterre Garden

The parterre garden has a long and storied history. It is a good system for gardening and is quite effective.

The Parterre Herbal Garden Microclimate

Why a parterre garden? It's equal part microclimate and ecology and space for tender herbs. Plus it looks really nice.

Pop Up Compost Piles

At Mezzacello, the various ecosystems always need tending. When we know that a garden bed will need to sit fallow for a

season because we either don't have time or money to get it done, I will intentionally plant nitrogen-fixing crops like clover or hairy vetch to promote nitrogen and moisture in the soil. The parterre gardens were finally ready to be planted. All of that clover, hairy vetch, dead leaves and twigs needed to be collected. Call it guerrilla composting if you will. But it's a great way to amass one cubic meter of biomass quickly.

To all exterior perspectives, this seems preplanned. What the general public doesn't know is that this strategy started because Rick is too lazy to haul all of his waste to the compost bins on the western edge of the gardens. So I just started collecting wastes in the right balance. I intentionally placed and distribute the dead leaves and twigs in the bed with an approximation of the amount of greenery that I am most likely to harvest and commensurate brown materials and manure waiting to be mixed in. I needed to balance out the greens with browns. It's not the prettiest way to do this, but it really works well in a pinch. All my neighbors and friends know that we are building Mezzacello as we go. I have systems. I document those systems and modify them as I go along to maximize learning from failure and success. I have found this pop up compost to be really useful.

All I have to do is collect it, mix it, and move it back to the compost bins and it's ready to go. If I harvest it in the right season, I'll mix in some more manure, mulch, added greens, and peat moss and voila! Instant lasagna garden! Of course Rick bought 64 boxwoods for the parterre so the lasagna garden isn't happening this summer, but there is another garden ecosystem that can use this bounty.