

How to Till Soil With Pigs

Most modern agricultural techniques require heavy tilling of the soil and dangerous chemical fertilizers. That method is expensive, leads to soil erosion, and is dangerous to the farmers, the consumer and the environment. Using swine to till and fertilize soil is a longstanding method that produces excellent planting beds and happy pigs!

Steps

- 1 Select an area to make a garden.** You will want to look for a level area most likely covered with grass or a previously grown crop. Two pot bellied pigs can till up a 10ft x 10ft (3 meters x 3 meters) pasture area in the summer in approximately a month.
- 2 Get a pig house.** You will want to have a place for the pigs to seek shelter from storms and get shade on sunny days. The house can be bottomless to allow the pigs to make a nest in the dirt below it. The house should also be light enough that you will be able to move it. Twelve bales of straw arranged in 3.5 sides make a great, portable pig house, especially if topped with polycarbonate that overlaps the edges, especially on the shady side, and is weighted down with heavy metal. The pig will nose loose straw into bedding and nestle within it at night.
- 3 Set up a fence around the soon-to-be garden.** If using a permanent fence, make sure that the fence is very sturdy - pigs are strong. Cattle panels work well if they're well anchored. Pigs can push down or root under many fences. If you are planning on moving the pigs to make your garden bigger (or if you want to make sure you have a fence the pigs cannot get out of) you may want to set up an electric fence. Several strands of poly-tape or electric tape suspended approximately one foot off the ground can contain pigs, once they are trained to the fence. ElectroNet fences also will work well.
- 4 Find at least two pigs.** Pigs are very social animals and like to live with at least one other pig. A pig's size depends on its breed and can range from a 150 pound pot bellied pig to a 700 pound Hampshire boar. If you do not have any experience with large livestock, your best choice is probably a smaller breed.
- 5 Put your pigs in the soon-to-be garden.** Make sure the pigs have access to water via a large water bowl or trough.
- 6 Wait.** Pigs love nothing more than rooting around in the soil, eating grass, roots, bugs and any other delicious treats they may find. While exhibiting this natural behavior, they unearth anything that is growing and leave behind tilled soil that is full of organic material and the pigs' own natural "fertilizer."
- 7 Move the pigs.** Once the area is turned over and most of the previous ground cover has been eaten, you have two choices. Either move the fence with the pigs in it and the pig house about halfway, giving the pigs a new area to till up and leaving you with the first half tilled and ready to begin planting or move the pigs completely into a new area.
- 8 Prepare the bed.** You will probably need to even out the new bed as the pigs will have areas dug out, especially where the pig house used to be. This should also move around the "fertilizer" and get the garden ready for planting. Any other preparation (making [raised beds](#), [mulching](#), etc.) is up to you
- 9 Plant.** You will want to plant as soon as possible to give your seeds or transplants a head start against the weeds that the pigs chewed down.
- 10 Reward your pigs with some fresh vegetables harvested from your new garden.**

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Tips

- You probably will not need to feed the pigs much, since they will be getting most of their food from the rooting. However, when you feed your pigs, you can put the food on areas that still have not been tilled to encourage them to not miss any spots.
- Pigs need LOTS of water. Make sure your pig has a constant source of clean drinking water as well as a wallow pond big enough to roll in. Pigs have very sensitive skin and by wallowing in mud the pig will protect itself from getting too sunburnt as well as discouraging biting pests.
- The larger the area, the more time the pigs will take to till it up. However, you should never give the pigs too small an area, since they will get stressed and will not till as effectively.
- During the winter months, the soil will be too hard for the pigs to root up. Keep your pigs in a secure area during these months and make sure to provide them with adequate food, water and shelter.
- Adopt a pot bellied pig! The former pet fad of pot bellied pigs has long died out, leaving many adult pigs in animal shelters and pig rescues. Why not give these pigs a new happy and healthy job?

Warnings

- Pigs are very strong. Large breeds of pigs can be very dangerous, so take caution.
- Make sure to give your pigs fly spray or other insect repellents that you prefer and fly traps during the summer months, as these pests can harm them.
- The use of an electric fence can be dangerous for both you and the pigs if you both are not trained in how to use one.

Things You'll Need

- Two or more pigs
- A pig house (depending on the pig's size)
- Fencing materials (either a strong standard fence or an electric fence)

Sources and Citations

- <http://www.pigplacementnetwork.com/>
- <http://www.petfinder.com/>