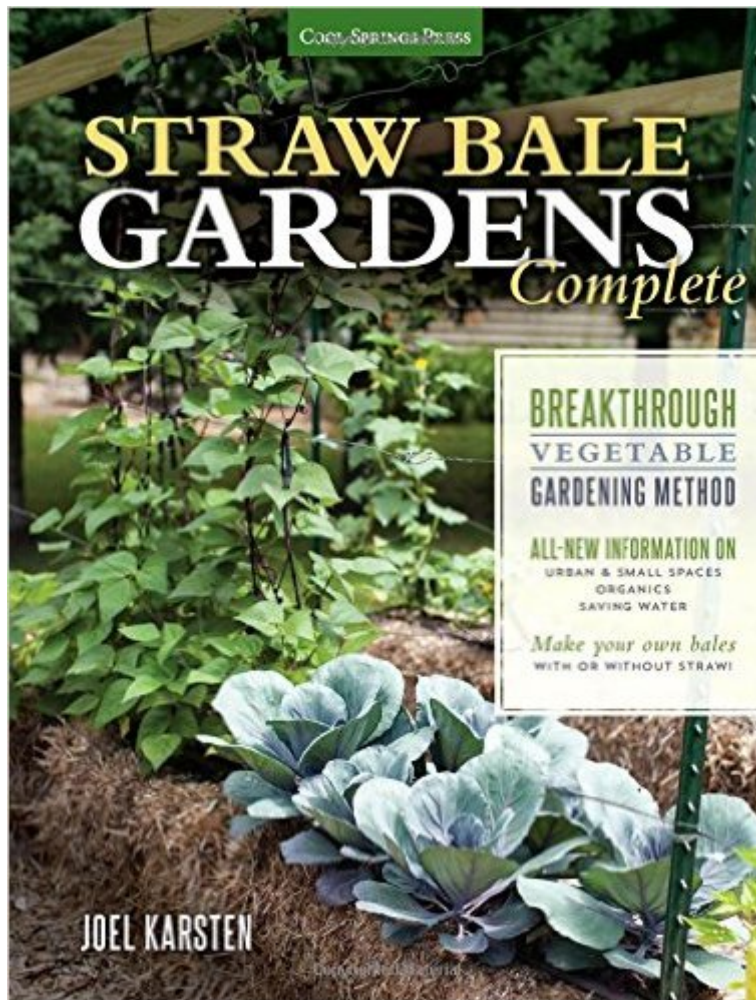


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# Straw Bale Gardens Complete



## Synopsis

"Are you ready to learn about a transformative garden technology that could change your life - for less than \$100?" - New York Times  
Take your straw bale gardening to the next level - in more places, with new products, and even, sometimes, skipping the straw! The reception and enthusiasm for straw bale gardening, introduced in 2013, has proved revolutionary in vegetable growing. Why? Because the bold promises in the book are kept: grow vegetables anywhere, earlier in the year, with no weeding. Gardeners everywhere are excited. Straw bale gardening works! In just the short amount of time that has passed, the gardening world and Joel Karsten himself have learned even more about how to apply this method in just about any environment: on a city balcony, in a rocky outpost, in a desert, and even in the tundra of Alaska. *Straw Bale Gardens Complete* contains all of the original information that has set the gardening world on fire. But it also goes much deeper, with nearly 50 pages of all-new advice and photos on subjects such as growing in a tight urban setting, making your straw bale garden completely organic, and using new fertilizers and conditioning products. There is even information on using straw bale techniques to grow veggies in other organic media for anyone who has a hard time finding straw. Fans of *Straw Bale Gardens* will not want to miss adding *Straw Bale Gardens Complete* to their gardening library. There is, literally, nothing else like it!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The reviews here seem to be mostly "plan to, want to, expect to". I'll make this short and sweet... I put in two bales this year as a trial and the results were not good...there were incredibly good!!!! put

in four tomatoes, three peppers, a zucchini, and a lemon cucumber on two bales, consciously trying to stress the concept to see what it would deliver. I will never garden any other way! The plants all grew rapidly and have been exuberantly productive. In addition, for the first time in 25 years living in this location (San Francisco Peninsula), I have not had to fight the slugs and snails! One tried to climb the bale but gave up. What a relief to be freed of that struggle. We're waiting for the huge crop of tomatoes to ripen while we harvest zucchini, cucumbers, and peppers. I wholeheartedly recommend Mr. Karsten's book!

This book has revolutionized how I garden. I have a 40x14 foot greenhouse and extensive outdoor gardens. However, I live high in the Rocky Mountains and my soil is nothing more than crushed shale. It costs me an arm and a leg to haul in compost every year and since my property is all pasture I don't have the luxury of leaves for massive amounts of compost. I started using straw bales for part of my garden last summer and I was stunned. It was the best garden I've ever had here. And at the end of the season we moved the wet, partially composted bales to the flower gardens and let them compost over the winter. Because the inside of the bales is warm from all the compost I was able to start plants a full 30 days before the normal season, with the help of a frost blanket on cold nights. I've brought in all straw bales for this summer and have already planted my spring crop in the greenhouse. This summer I'm adding Azomite dust and fungus to the bales, along with red earth worms. I think I'll end up planting half of my gardens in straw bales each year. Then use the leftover, partially composted bales to enrich my poor soil so I'll be gardening half in amended soil and half in bales each year. It's less expensive than hauling in compost and **MANY FEWER** weeds!

4 Months after getting the book I can say this method works great. We tried the straw bale and cannot believe the results so far in 2013.. we are in Minnesota and with tilled clay soil always had a uninspiring crop. A lot of fruit on the vine and hope they all ripen and taste great..TBD..The basil has the best we ever tasted and so aromatic..Do recommend this process and are planning to expand for 2014  
Oct 2 2013 UPDATE: This was the best veggie garden we have had. The only problem is that we had tried to many different plants in two straw bales. Crops that grew very tall ( Basil and tomatoes) overshadowed the smaller height plants like carrots and onions. We will extend the bales next year and have a section for smaller plants by themselves. Otherwise the plants liked the conditions. It is important to keep the watering up at ;east evry couple days.. For a first year experiment thumbs up..

I bought this book after reading the NY Times article about the book and the concept of straw bale gardening. The author is a bit optimistic about the time it takes to condition the bales based on my experience after following his method to the T. Plan on four weeks. I think it's better to start early and give yourself a bit of leeway. I do live in the cool damp NW and that may have affected my results. The book is worthwhile for great illustrations and the basics of straw bale gardening. Supplement the book by Googling "Straw Bale Gardening" and get some advice from others that have also been employing this technique for years. One other note. I expected the bales to breakdown more than they did before planting. The best tool I found for planting is an old hatchet. I whack away where I want to plant things that come in pots to make the hole for planting.

This book is truly a "Straw Bale Garden (SBG) for Dummies" guide! I have a large raised garden that was overcome by Bermuda over the last year, beginning with last year's vegetables/fruits. Even with a Mantis and two people, we couldn't keep it weeded. When I heard about SBGs, the concept sounded too good to be true. So, being the overachiever I am, I put heavy black plastic over my raised garden soil to fully kill any living plants in the original bed. Then I measured and built a 32-bale garden on top of the black plastic sheeting [DON'T DO THIS, per the instructions in the book! I'd already done this step prior to buying the manual!]. After placing/conditioning/planting the bales, I spread four more bales of straw over the black plastic, to try to mitigate the book-described problems with the plastic. I have to say I LOVE LOVE LOVE SBGs!! Mr. Karsten's book is truly a step-by-step "How-to...", and I recommend it above other SBG books (a few of which I bought at the same time). Please try this type of garden, using just this one book; you won't be disappointed!

I'm a lazy gardener and always lose interest in weeding about a quarter of the way into the summer. Plus I have horrible knees. Bought this book last year. It was an interesting read, and seemed easy enough, so my 10 year old son and I gave it a whirl. We did 10 bales. It was the best garden I ever had! Very low maintenance. Produced like crazy! I was still getting cucumbers and tomatoes in early October (in Minnesota!). This year we are doing 15 bales. One suggestion: build the trellis, like the book says to do. I didn't last year, and my tomato plants were so big with so much fruit, that I had a hard time keeping them up with cages, posts, twine, etc.

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