

What is a Sweepings Pit ?

The Farmers' Handbook - "Near The House 1", Chapter 3 - Sweepings Pit



Mrs Maiya Khatri is growing potatoes in her sweepings pit

Dirt is the home of disease. If we don't pay attention to regular home cleaning we can suffer from various illnesses. It can be very expensive to be cured from these illnesses. Now let's think, how dirty are our homes and courtyard ? Yes, they're dirty, but there's an easy way to solve this. The dirt should be collected in one fixed place. Extra money or work isn't needed for this. The place to put the dirt is called a **sweepings pit**.

The Sweepings pit is where dirt, leaves and other organic waste swept up from inside and outside the house is kept, and it is used to make compost as well as keeping the area clean and tidy .

Why make a Sweepings Pit ?

The Benefits of a Sweepings Pit

- dirt is put in a fixed place
- this keeps the home and courtyard clean
- this helps to protect against illness
- the decomposed sweepings can be used as an extra source of compost

We sweep up daily and lots of sweepings are produced. If we use it right this becomes an important resource - it makes great compost.



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How to make a Sweepings Pit ?

How to make :-

It's really easy to make a sweepings pit. It doesn't take much time and can last for a long while.

Time to make :-

The sweepings pit can be made at any time. It's good to start it after the monsoon, if you have one.

Place to make it :-

The sweepings pit should be made at the edge of the courtyard.

Method of making a Sweepings Pit

There are 2 ways of making it :-

- (a) digging a pit; (b) without digging a pit



Materials needed to build a Sweepings Pit



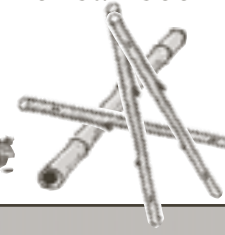
Hook (cutting tool)

Small sticks or bamboo

Crow bar

Leaves, etc. (sweepings)

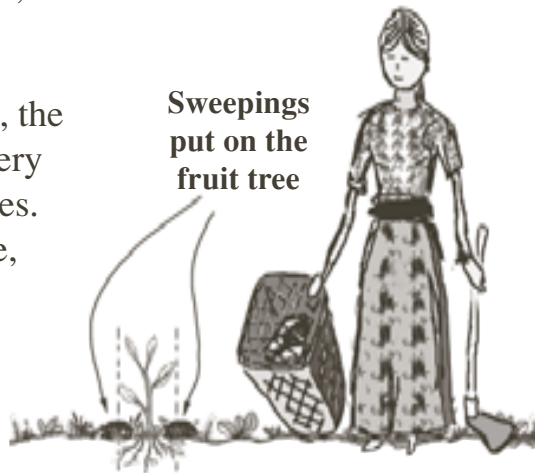
Broom



(a) Digging a pit

You can choose the best place on the edge of your courtyard to dig the pit. The depth and width of the pit is up to you - see how much you sweep up daily, and according to filling the pit once or twice a year, decide how big the pit should be.

After making the pit, the collected sweepings are very good compost for fruit trees. In one farmer's experience, fruit trees given compost from sweepings fruited 2 years before those which didn't have it.



(b) Not digging a pit

Put 4 strong upright corner posts in the ground and in between put in smaller uprights. Weave bamboo or other small sticks to make a basket-type effect. This needs to be good and strong, to last a long time. Fill this with the daily sweepings, making sure they can't spill out.

If sweepings can be kept for a long time this can be used as compost for your own field crops or kitchen garden. So it's good to make a pit or frame to hold as many sweepings as possible, for a long time.

Like this you need to develop the habit of daily putting the sweepings into the pit.

Let's See

How to make a sweepings pit



The pit is made in the right place to collect the sweepings, on the edge of the courtyard

Put 3-5 seed potatoes onto fertile soil placed in the bottom



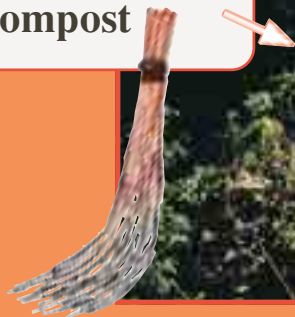


To make the heap, first put 4 upright sticks at the corners



Then put smaller sticks in between

Sweeping into this from the house and courtyard every day will fill the heap and make compost



A stick buried in the middle of the heap (◀) will help the sweepings to rot quicker



If potatoes are planted in the heap, you need to water from time to time





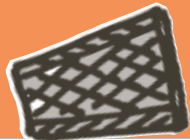
After 4 months the potatoes are ready for harvesting. This is also called "vertical growing"



When the heap is taken apart, both potatoes and compost can be removed



Using bamboo in a pot, here strawberries are grown in the sweepings



Vertical Potato Growing

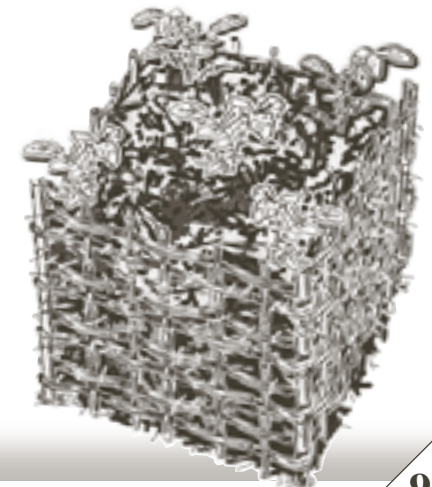
There are many methods to give maximum production from a small area with minimum inputs. Of these, to get quick benefits from a small space potatoes can be grown using this method. This way of growing potatoes is done on an area about 1 metre square and one metre high. So from a square metre of land a small family doesn't have to buy potatoes.



Using vertical growing on this much land, 12-15 kg of potatoes can be produced

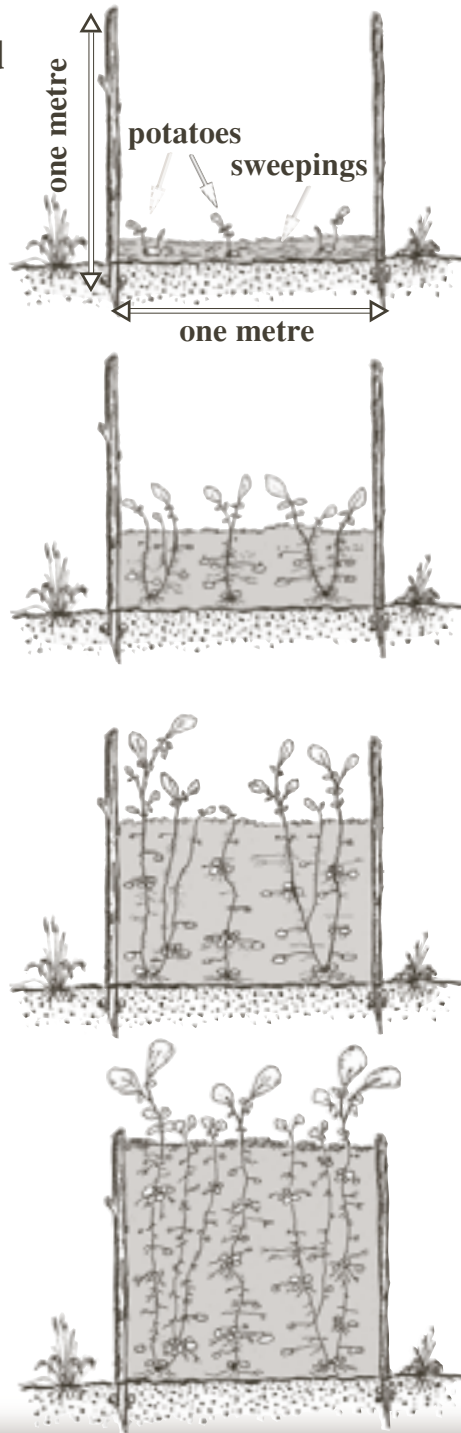
Benefits of Vertical Potato Growing

- produce lots of potatoes on minimum land
- minimum input gives more production
- don't need much seed
- don't need to dig or earth up
- makes use of waste biomass



Vertical Growing Method

Make a frame one metre square from upright sticks, and weave or tie horizontal sticks or bamboo up to a height of 1 metre. Put 2-4 inches of leaf litter and compost on the bottom. On top of this place 4-5 seed potatoes, spaced separately and evenly. Now cover the potatoes with 4 to 6 inches of leaf litter and sweepings. The potatoes will sprout, and after they sprout above the leaf litter, from time to time should be covered with more litter and sweepings, allowing just an inch of the tip sticking out. Keep on adding the sweepings daily. Keep covering like this for up to 3 months, then stop adding for one month until the potatoes start to flower at about 4 months. At this time, the heap can be taken down and potatoes harvested all at once, or as needed.



Farmers' Experience

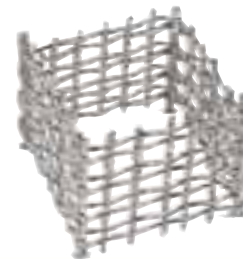
Mrs Rikali Gurung

From Nepal, Surkhet district, Gumi - 3, Ratadada village, and a member of "Hariyali" women's group Mrs Rikali Gurung has made a sweepings pit. Now let's hear about her experience.



Mrs Rikali Gurung

“ At first I didn't know this method and sweepings were thrown away anywhere. But compost made from sweepings is really well rotted and fertile. Our corn grew much better using this compost compared to any other compost. Before, all the dirt from the house and yard went to waste. Now, in 5 months we get 15-16 baskets of compost. At first I put it on the corn, and by the time this is harvested another load is ready for the wheat. There's even some left for the kitchen garden. In this way, waste resources are well used and the house and yard are kept clean. This gives many benefits, and I'm going to keep using this method each year. ”





Read On !



Subjects Related to Sweepings

Good benefits can be had from the information in this book about the sweepings pit. However, this information is also linked to other methods. For extra benefits let's read, learn and practice from other related chapters.



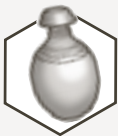
Chapters on how to make various Nurseries

Different types of plants need different types of management to grow them. Information on how to build and manage the home nursery, fruit nursery, air nursery, hot bed and leaf pots is given in these chapters.



House Hygiene chapter

Don't think that health improvement comes only from eating good food. If the house and kitchen are dirty, even more diseases can spread. Information about easy techniques to keep the house clean are given in this chapter



Kitchen Garden and Mixed Vegetable Growing

How to make and manage a home vegetable garden for permanence, ease and simplicity ? Information on doing less work for more production while also being able to produce a wide range of fresh vegetables is given in these chapters.

