

I started seasoning my bale May 17 with the Master Gardener method from the Portage County Master Gardener Association. I watered every day for 10 days. Days 1, 3, 5 I used 1/2 cup of 10-10-10 fertilizer. Days 7,8,9 I used 1/4 cup. Day 10 I used 1 cup. My straw bale was in the fence corner of my regular garden so I could use the fence as a support for my tomato plant. It received full sun for the entire day. I filled a two gallon watering can with well water and let it set overnight to warm up. I planted my straw bale on June 2. I planted a tomato plant in the corner, four green bell pepper plants in the middle section, five cantaloupe seeds and a potato in the side of the bale. I had a lot of leaf damage on the peppers early in the season and late tomato blight. I got rid of the damaged leaves and that helped some. The peppers did much better in the straw bale and the tomatoes did much better in the main garden. The cantaloupe has set five melons. The straw bale potato is not doing as well as the regular garden potato. I have harvested several peppers but no other produce is ready. I am not sure why everything is so slow to ripen. I did fertilize every week with a 10-10-10 fertilizer and watered every other day.

I feel this method of growing things is too labor intensive. It requires a lot of extra work. The nice thing was it didn't get many weeds! I am glad I have had the opportunity to do it, but I have a large enough garden space to work with so will probably never do it again. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this program.

Pam Hanson