HUGELKULTUR GARDEN

by farmer florist Sarah Wagstaff of @suotfarm

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INTRODUCTION

Hügelkultur is a German method of gardening that has been practiced for hundreds of years meaning hill culture. Mimicking a forest's natural life cycle, it is a horticultural technique where decaying wood debris & other compostable biomass is mounded & planted as a raised bed.

THE BASICS

Trees that fall in a forest often become nurse logs decaying & providing nutrients & sunlight to seedlings. As the wood decays, its porosity increases, allowing it to store water like a sponge. Airpockets created by the settling & wood's decomposition, gives the benefits of tilling, without the destruction of soil microorganisms (meaning the bed will be no till, long term.) The organic material of the rotting wood houses beneficial soil microorganisms & composting wood generates heat which should extend the growing season.

SOME FACTS

Improves soil fertility, water retention, and soil warming, thus benefiting plants grown on or near such mounds.

They can be used as a privacy screen & in conjunction with keyhole, lasagna, & other green gardening methods

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Sequester carbon into the soil.

Ideal for growing annuals, perennials, grasses, fruits, vegetables, trees, & bulbs.

SUOT FARM & FLOWERS

Consultations & follow up questions:
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FREQUENTLY ASKED ???

Which types of wood can be used?
Hard & soft woods are both fine. Hard woods like alder, aspen, birch, cottonwood, maple, oak, poplar will take longer to decompose.
Soft woods like pine, cedar, fir, spruce will break down more quickly.
Do NOT use:
Black walnut or black locust (inhibit growth of other plants)
Living willow (tendency to resprout)
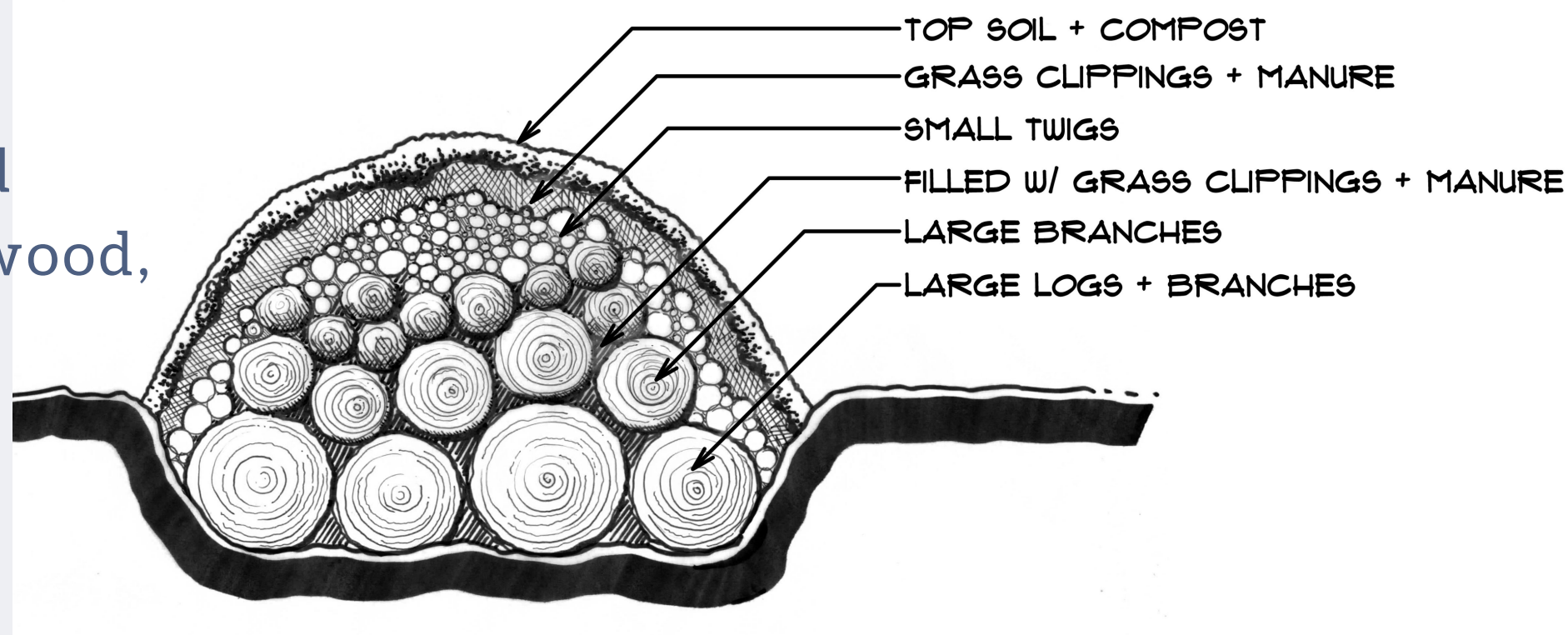Treated/painted lumber or railroad ties

Where should I build the berm?
Hugelkultur mounds should be constructed parallel with the site contours to capture water runoff.

Can I plant it immediately?
Yes, you should select plants that are suited to the conditions created (shade lovers in shade, sun lovers in sun, etc.). All plants will need supplemental water until their establishment stage is complete.

Can I grow vegetables in my Hugel?
Yes, annual plants won't enjoy the benefits of longterm nutrient release from the logs but are great place holders while trees, grasses, perennials, & ornamental plants become established.

TOP SOIL + COMPOST
GRASS CLIPPINGS + MANURE
SMALL TWIGS
FILLED W/ GRASS CLIPPINGS + MANURE
LARGE BRANCHES
LARGE LOGS + BRANCHES

FIND OUT MORE:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTHUalsT8sQ&t=18s

www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/the-many-benefits-of-hugelkultur/

www.bobvila.com/articles/hugelkultur/

https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1641&context=stu_hon_theses

https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/sustainable-landscapes-creating-a-hugelkultur-for-gardening-with-stormwater-management-benefits.html

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BUILD YOUR OWN

Which types of 'greens' do you have?
(Kitchen waste, yard debris, weeds (no seeds), grass clippings, fresh leaves)
*List in order of biggest amount to smallest*

Which types of 'browns' do you have?
(Logs, cardboard, straw, manure, sticks/twigs, wood chips/sawdust, dirt, ash, paper towels/napkins, egg cartons, newspaper)
List in order of biggest (size/mass) to smallest

What plants do you want to include?
(Trees, shrubs, grasses, perennials, annuals/vegetables)
List in order of biggest (mature height/width) to smallest
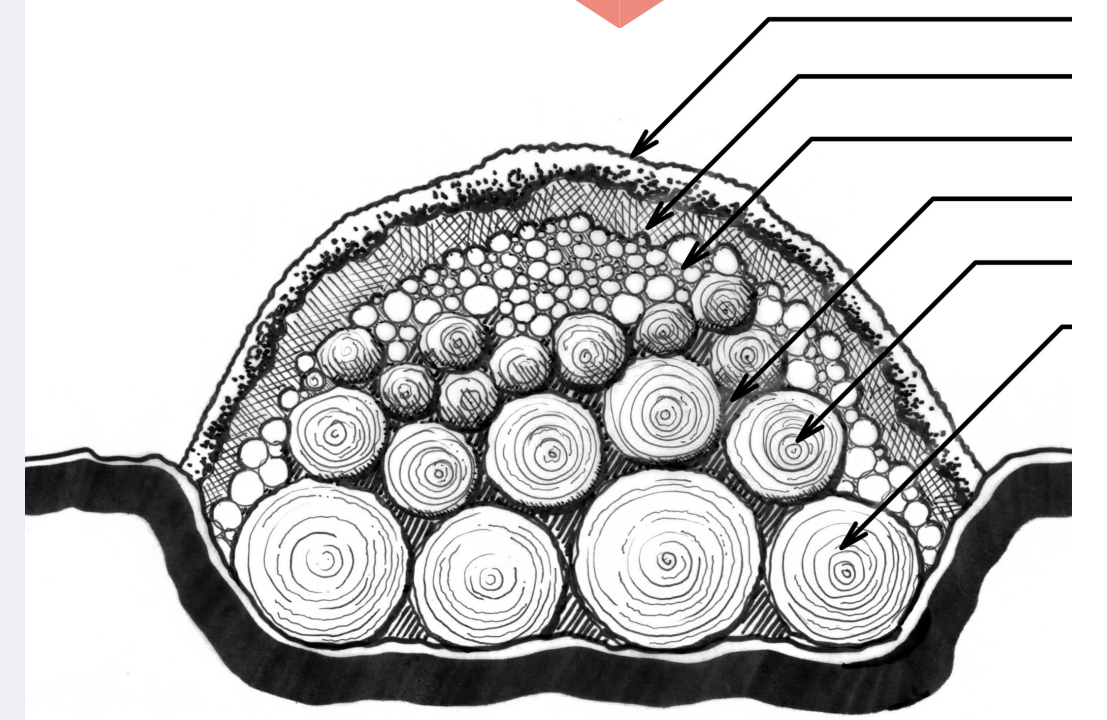
PUT IT ALL TOGETHER:

BIGGEST LOGS & BRANCHES FIRST:

_____

NEXT LARGEST DIAMETER OF 'BROWNS' (AFTER LOGS):

_____

THICKEST LAYER OF 'GREENS' NEXT:

_____

THICK LAYER OF 'BROWNS' AGAIN:

_____

THICK LAYER OF 'GREENS' AGAIN:

_____

THICK LAYER OF TOP DRESSING/MULCH:

_____

SAMPLE PLANTING PLANS

ORNAMENTAL SHADE GARDEN
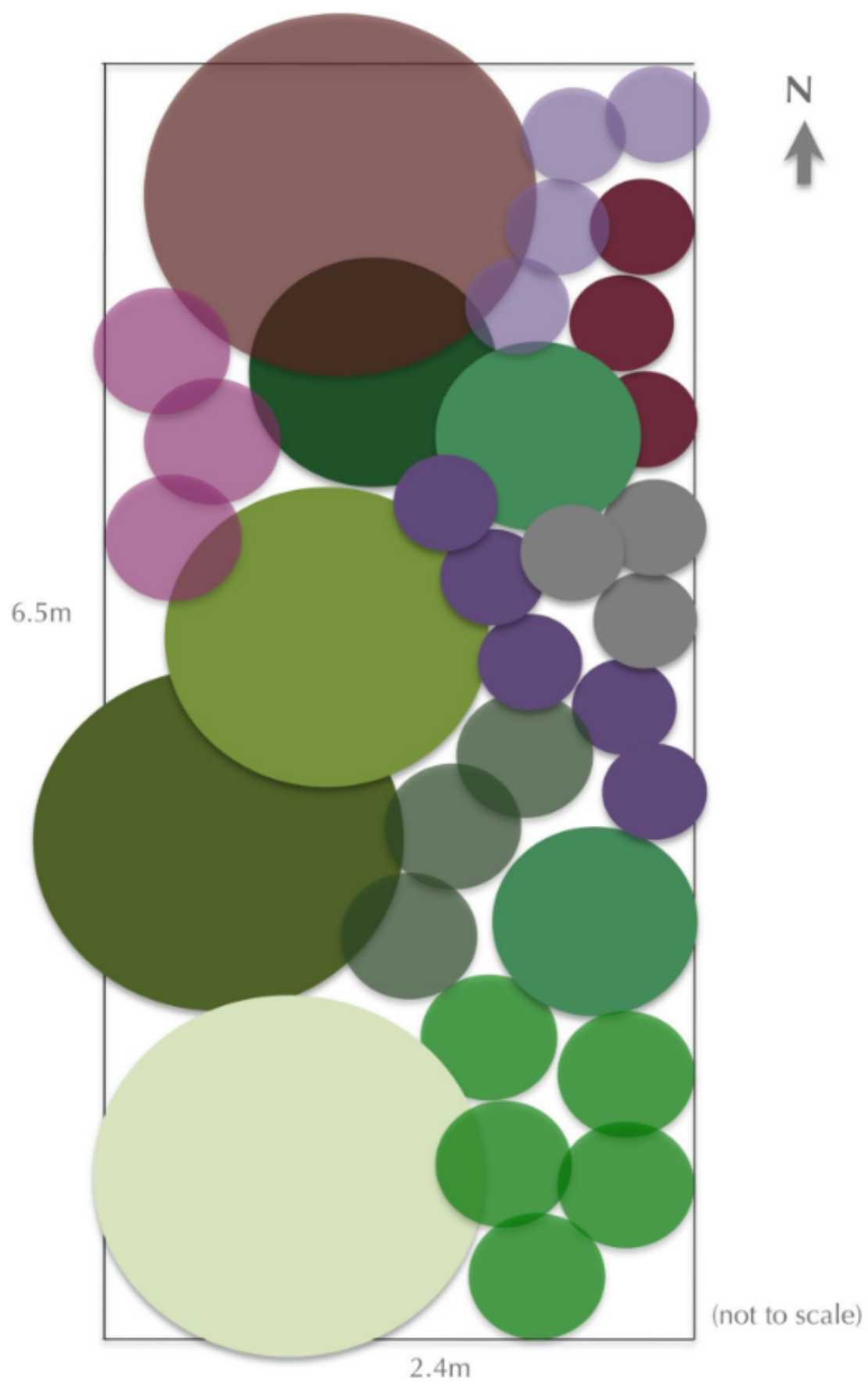
PATIO BED
Wisteria Cottage

Eupatorium purpureum	Bay tree (existing)
Sambucus nigra 'Eva'	Osmanthus x burkwoodii
Ferns	Cornus alba 'Elegantissima'
Hydrangea paniculata 'Limelight'	Box domes
Stachys byzantina	Aster x frickartii 'Monch'
Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light'	Sedum 'Matrona'
Perovskia atriplicifolia 'Blue Spire'	

6.5m

2.4m

(not to scale)

EDIBLE VEGGIE GARDEN