

UPDATE 11-2-2018 – Ruth’s experience with American Hydrosoil used in her garden

Bed #1: This is the first raised bed. As soon as the bed was filled (with compost, manure &, American Hydrosoil, we planted Jersey Giant asparagus crowns. Why Jersey Giants, you ask. As the name suggests, they’re big; they’re also hardy, and will grow here. They are supposed to be clonal all male plants. Either nobody told the plants, or the ones I got were not male clones, but seedlings. The very first year, we had them, they produced berries. The berries had seeds; the seeds were fertile. Everyplace the berries dropped, new asparagus plants grew. We had originally planned for the asparagus to have half the bed. They’re at three quarters, now, and continuing to expand. We planted them in rows, with stepping stones, between the rows. We managed to get the stepping stones out before, they were completely overgrown. Did I mention that asparagus plants also spread via the roots? I also plant my hot peppers in this bed. If you plant the hot peppers near the sweet peppers, the plants will cross pollinate, and some of your sweet peppers will have a surprise for you. Best to keep them apart. In early spring this bed also has garden peas. The peas will be done, before the asparagus overgrows the place. (In winter the asparagus tops die back, and have to be cut off, and put into the compost pile. This is why, there are asparagus plants coming up in and around the compost.) I planted sweet basil in this bed, several years ago, and it self-seeds, every year. I found a giant basil plant between the hot peppers, and the asparagus, just last week. Better late than never.

Bed # 2: This bed is much bigger than the first. This is where we grow the rest of the large vegetable crop. We always plant the tomatoes here, and it's the bed for the sweet peppers and eggplant. Because tomatoes, pepper, and eggplant are in the same family, we try and move them around; the same diseases and insects will attack all these plants. We plant beans, and cucumbers on the permanent trellises, along two sides of this bed, alternating their placement every year. We also grow lettuce and other greens, wherever the tomatoes and their family members are not. We place the tomato cages where the greens were growing the previous year, and plant green peas around the cages. The peas will be finished, by the time the tomatoes need the space. We cage the peppers and eggplant, as well.

American Hydrosoil's Big Pay-Off: In late summer this year, we had a sprinkler system failure. I know what you're thinking, "ok, it's time to drag out the hoses, and water manually." The only problem was, it took at least a week for us to notice that the sprinklers were not going off, in the wee hours of the morning. One of the reasons that we did not notice, was that the asparagus did not droop. They're right out the side door; they're HUGE, and they looked fine.

By the time, the sprinkler system broke, the lettuce, assorted greens, summer squash, beans, and peas were done. So, no damage there. I had real concerns about the tomato plants, the hot peppers, and the one sweet pepper plant, that had deigned to come up. The eggplant had already informed us that it was not going to be with us this year.

When we finally discovered that the sprinklers were not working, we did water manually, in the summer, in Texas. Amazingly, we did not lose very much at all. The one scraggly cucumber plant in the asparagus bed bit the dust, but the bulk of the gardens were able to weather the drought.

We did not lose a single tree, and all the rosemary, horseradish, and spearmint were fine. All the peppers, and the tomatoes also survived. They would NEVER have been able to survive a week, in a hot, Texas summer, with no water, if it were not for the American Hydrosoil.

Looking to the future: Jim is bringing me another 10 bags of American Hydrosoil, next week. As raised beds made of compost, lose soil gradually, both from further composting, and some leakage through the weep holes in the brick walls, we add compost to the beds, every year. We will be adding more American Hydrosoil to all the beds, this year. We've also starting to collect coffee grounds from Starbucks again. Earthworms love coffee grounds. I'm counting on the earthworms to help mix the new Hydrosoil into the beds.



Ruth Leibowitz – Vegetable Garden Owner