

California Center for the Arts Escondido Museum
Hügelkultur Art Project
Artists Ruth Wallen and Nina Karavasiles
May 2018

History

Hügelkultur (*rhymes with google, sounds like "hoogle-cool-tour"!*) is a composting process that uses decaying wood and other materials that can be composted to regenerate soil. "Hügelkultur" is a German word meaning "hill culture" and has been practiced for hundreds of years in Eastern Europe.

Why

Instead of putting branches, leaves and grass clippings in bags by the curb side for trash pick up... build a hugel bed. Simply mound logs, branches, leaves, grass clippings, straw, cardboard, petroleum-free newspaper, manure, compost or even old natural fiber clothes (whatever biomass you have available). Now top it with soil and plant your flowers! In the second season, you can start planting veggies too!

Facts

A large bed can give out a constant supply of nutrients for many years. Soil aeration increases as those branches and logs break down, which means the bed will not need to be tilled (turned). The logs and branches act like a sponge. Rainwater is stored and then released during drier times. Hügelkultur keeps carbon in the soil rather than releasing it into the atmosphere.

How

Our Hügelkultur tree was made by first digging out the shape of a tree, but a Hügel mound can be any shape larger than 3 feet. Place dead wood in the bottom, then add nitrogen rich materials such as manure or kitchen waste. Add branches, layers of small sticks, straw, anything that will decompose. Water the layers well. Fill space with leaf litter, but don't compact it too tightly - it needs air! Put two inches of top soil and a layer of mulch. You are now ready to plant. For this project, we used as many native plants as possible to attract bees, which are critical to the pollination process for plants.

More Links

www.publicaddressart.com

Key Words

wiki hugelkultur
permaculture
nurse logs
climate change

Cool people to look up

Sepp Holzer
Paul Wheaton
Geoff Lawton

