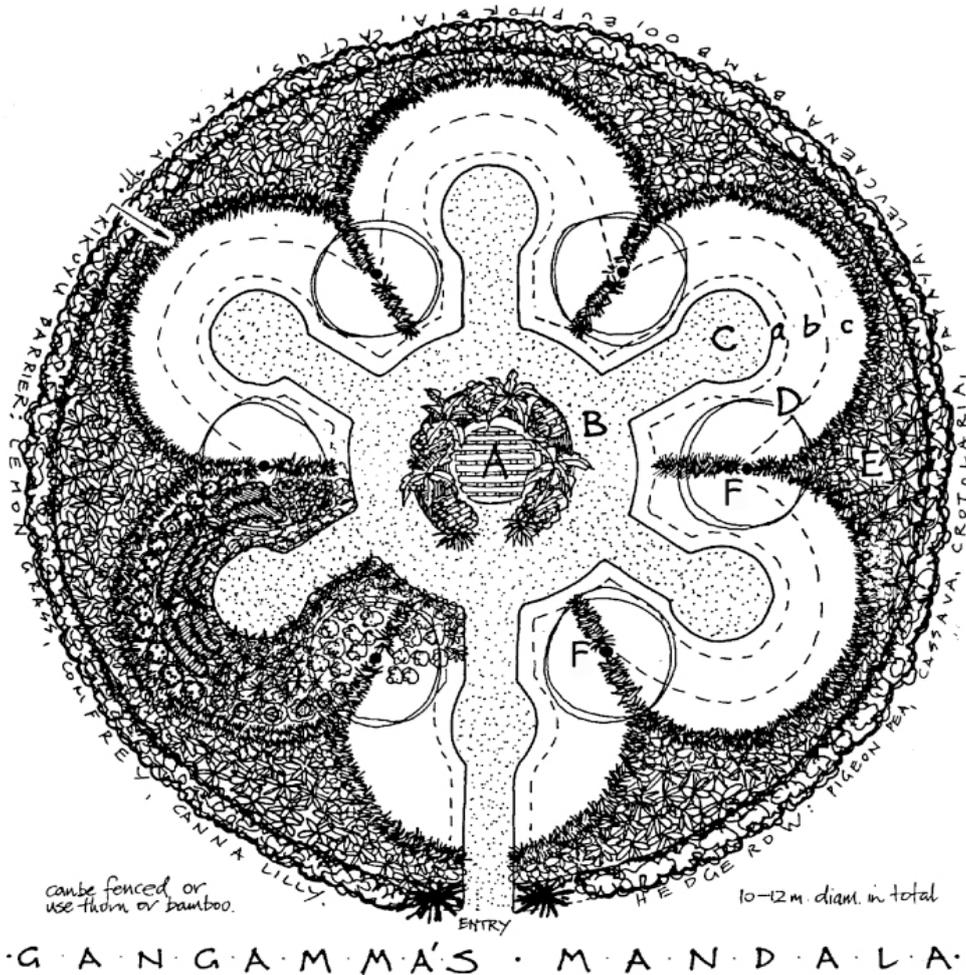


'The Mulch Pit' 3rd Mandala Project



Gangamma's Mandala is our inspiration! It comes from a web sourced extract from **Permaculture: A Designer's Handbook, 1988, Tagari Publications.**

We have begun and etched out a circle 12m in diameter, the circumference of that circle is being built with 'earthbags' 6 layers high - each layer is 5cm. The earthbags are sewn from used fabric in various lengths but all with a finished width of 30cm. (see themulchpit.net for sewing instructions)

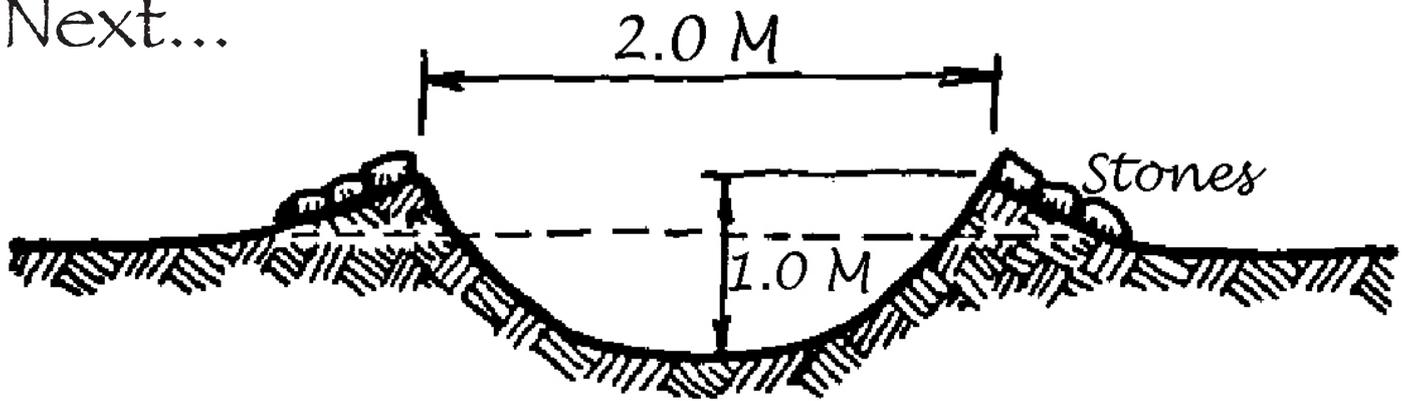
The soil for filling the bags - the soil comes from the excavation for the water tank, it has been deposited behind the new compost system. Fill a barrow with the soil and bring carefully to the site as close as possible to the next bag to be filled.

The process for filling the earthbags:

1. Lay the bag in its finished position in the wall, one person then lifts up the open end of the bag and holds it open for filling,
2. using small pots the earth is tipped into the bag by others, together make sure the bag fills evenly, allow the bag to fall into place as it fills.
3. The bag will only need to be 3/4 full, (check the other completed bags!)
4. once filled the open end needs to be secured (hand sewn) then the soil needs to be distributed evenly along the bag.
5. Finally compact the soil by walking over the top several times!

The plan is to go 6 layers high (30cm) with this earthbag garden wall.

Next...



1) At the center of the garden scribe a circle two meters across and excavate the soil to a dish shape, ridged on the perimeter, and about 0.6 to one meter deep from hollow to rim. (We may need to jackhammer a dish that is not as deep as suggested) This is the banana-sweet potato-papaya circle garden, as above.

2) Then cover the whole circle with wet paper or wet cardboard, banana leaves, or any sheet mulch material and fill the hollow (or over-fill it as a dome) with “rough mulch” of short logs, coarse twigs, hay, rice husks, and sawdust, or indeed any humus-creating materials. Scatter a little manure, ash, lime, dolomite, or fertilizer. If stones are available, bank them to the outside of the rim.

3) Plant the rim with four to five papayas four or so bananas (dwarf types), and eight to 10 sweet potato plants. If available, place yams or taro inside the rim. Later, plant beans to climb the banana and papaya stalks. A circular path 0.6 to one meter wide is bark chipped around this central circle garden.

4) Then the rest of the area inside the garden wall is filled with layers of mulch & manure in a lasagne fashion starting & finishing with mulch: Mulch/Manure/Mulch... depending on availability

5) Off the central circular pathway six “keyholes” or indentations are made and bark chipped. The garden now looks like image below.

We have made six major keyholed beds, next

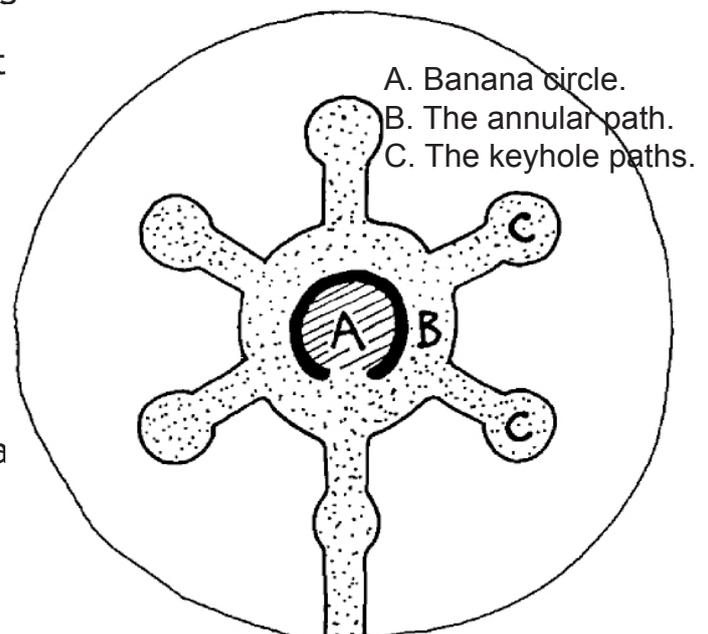
6) Plant a strip of lemon-grass or vetiver grass between each bed to separate.

7) Edge border & windbreak

Inside the edge (50-70cm) plant strips of lemon-grass, and arrowroot (*Canna edulis*) and behind that on parkland side in particular, plant a taller border of cassava/banana/papaya/moringa/pigeon pea *Leucaena/Crotalaria*.

These plants form a hedge or windbreak.

All these borders yield mulch, forage, barrier effects, or food.



Now the wet season will settle it all in, we can plant a cover crop of pumpkins like we did last time and enjoy the transformation.