

# Building a Raised Bed Garden

Raised bed gardens are also called garden boxes, which are excellent for small garden plots of veggies or herbs. Garden boxes are beneficial since they minimize bending, provide good drainage, prevent soil compaction, and provide a barrier for pests such as slugs, snails, rabbits, or deer (when enclosed). The sides of the garden box keep valuable garden soil from being eroded or washed away during heavy rainfall.

Raised beds are not the same as garden planters. Planters are elevated containers which have bottoms to prevent the soil from falling out. These bottoms are usually slatted, with some type of semi-permeable cloth barrier which permits drainage. On the other hand, raised beds do not have bottoms to allow the roots to go deeper into the ground and reach for available nutrients.

Pre-made raised beds can be purchased. However, they can be made with relative ease and can be constructed using different materials. The choice of wood to be used for a raised bed is a personal preference. Some options include cedar and redwood. These are naturally water-resistant but can be expensive and are somewhat hard to find. Hemlock, fir, and pine are also suitable materials to use when constructing a raised bed, but, these do not last very long.

Another option is pressure treated lumber for ground contact. Pressure treated lumber has been a controversial topic for many years. "The purpose of chemical pressure treatment is to protect wood from rot, decay and wood-ingesting insects. Chromated copper arsenate (CCA) was the most controversial treatment and was banned for

consumer use by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2003. Current treatments such as alkaline copper quaternary (ACQ) are deemed low-risk by the EPA and designated safe for use around humans, pets, plants and vegetables." In addition, "creosote-treated wood is not a good option for vegetable raised beds." (1)

After you have selected the building material for your garden box, choose a location to place your new garden bed. When choosing your location, keep in mind the types of plants you will be adding to the box and the amount of sunshine available in the specific area. You can also decide how long or how high you want the bed to be.

To make the most of your limited space in the raised bed garden, it can be divided into a square foot garden. A square foot garden is made by sectioning the bed into square feet using a string and nails to hold it down to the bed. Different crops can then be grown in each section. The seeds would be sown a little closer together than in traditional spacing for growing the crops. This would allow you to use more of the plot of the land and offer less open space. This would produce more yield, then the crops can be thinned out to allow the larger plants to grow even bigger.



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## THE LIST OF THINGS YOU'LL NEED:



1. Two 2" x 8" x 10' wood (they can be cut to 3x7 length or the desired length – you can get the wood cut at Lowes or Home Depot if they are purchased there). You may decide to double the side for a bigger bed (optional).
2. One 2" x 4" x 8' wood cut in 2 feet posts (optional)
3. Sixteen 3" wood screws (You may use a #6 or #8)
4. ½" wood nail
5. 14 cubic feet of soil mix (personal choice of an organic garden mix)
6. Electric drill & drill bit (bit size to match screws)
7. Tape measure
8. Hammer
9. Jute twine
10. Cardboard

### BUILDING THE BED

1. Carefully measure and cut the boards to the desired length (3x7 lengths and 2 ft. posts). Attach the posts to the side of each board and then screw them together using 6-inch wood screws. Posts provide additional support but are optional.
2. Position the box and place a layer of cardboard underneath the box.
3. Completely soak the cardboard with water. The cardboard will suffocate the grass; it will decompose underneath preventing weeds from growing in the raised bed and provide nutrients for the soil. Soil microorganisms will also remain in tact. Excess work for digging is avoided.
4. Fill in bed with preferred soil mixture. A mixture may include 8 cubic feet of topsoil, 4 cubic feet of compost, 1.5 cubic feet peat moss and .5 cubic feet organic all-purpose fertilizer (i. e. alfalfa meal, kelp meal and rock phosphate).
5. Soak garden box so that the soil mix is fully hydrated.

### SQUARE FOOT GARDEN LAYOUT

Add your grids by dividing the bed into one-foot sections. Using the ½ inch nail as a marker and the jute twine to make the square foot sections. The square foot gardening method is designed to maximize the garden space. Plant each square according to the specified plant spacing. A trellis can be placed on the north side for vining crops. Plant the larger crops on the north side of the bed.

Stayed tuned for the video on “How to make a Raised Bed” made by Seedtime and Harvest.

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