



Raised Beds

WHAT IS A RAISED BED?

A raised bed is a mound of soil in which gardeners plant their crops and flowers. Many raised beds are framed or enclosed. Frames help keep the soil in place during rainstorms and watering.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A RAISED BED?

- * Once the soil is prepared, you don't have to walk on it again during the growing season.
- * If you have contaminated or poor soil, it's easier to bring in good soil to create a raised bed than to amend the soil in the whole area. In soggy areas, the soil in raised beds will drain more quickly.

Make sure the beds are no more than two arm lengths wide, so that you can reach everywhere within the bed without stepping in it.



You can work in the garden in wet weather without getting your feet wet or compacting the soil.

- * The soil in raised beds warms up earlier in the spring and stays warm longer in the fall. This extends the growing season.

Raised beds are ideal for gardening on rubble-filled city lots.



- * It's easier to tend the garden when it is raised above ground level, because you don't have to do as much bending.



HOW DO YOU BUILD A RAISED BED?

1. Making a raised bed on a city lot

Use string to mark off where the bed will be. Use a pickaxe to loosen up hard, compacted soil and rubble in the bed. This will help the bed drain, and will allow roots to grow deeper.

Have good topsoil delivered to the site. Work some of the topsoil into the existing soil to a 15 cm depth. Build the frame around the bed, and fill it with soil.



2. Making a raised bed using existing soil

Rake the soil from the walkways to the top of the bed. Make the soil mound about 15 cm high. To make the bed more permanent, build an edge with wood planks, or another material that will keep the soil in place.



3. Making a raised bed frame

You can build the sides of a raised bed out of cinder blocks, stones, or landscape timbers. Do not use treated lumber or railroad ties. They contain poisons that you do not want in your garden soil. Hold the planks in place with stakes or steel rods or pipes. You can also use wood screws to fasten the corners together. Do not use nails, as they might split the wood.



4. Preparing soil

Mix lots of compost or other organic matter into the soil in your raised bed. Flatten the top with a rake before planting. You can plant crops closer together than in a regular garden. You do not need space between rows of plants, because you walk outside the beds.



