

Raised Bed Vegetable Gardening

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One of the best ways to get started gardening is by using raised garden beds. Raised garden beds are an option for all gardeners and allows you to grow more vegetables in a limited space while increasing your soil quality.

What is a Raised Garden Bed?

A raised garden bed is precisely what the name suggests – a raised garden is a method of growing plants higher than the ground. Where soil is enclosed in freestanding box or frame built with wood, but cinder boxes and metal are options as well. They allow gardeners to place soil aboveground and plant their crops there.

The Benefits of Raised Garden Beds

- Ideal For Small Spaces
- More Productive Gardening
- Chores Are Easier and More Comfortable
- Gives You Control Over Soil Quality
- Reduces Weeds
- Looks Nice

Best Materials to Use for Building Raised Garden Beds

- Pressure-Treated Lumber
- Cedar
- Concrete Blocks
- Raised Bed Kits

What Not to Use to Build Raised Beds

- Railroad Ties: treated with creosote, a toxic chemical
- Tires: contain heavy metals that might leach into the surrounding soil
- Pallets: some treated with a chemical called methyl bromide, an endocrine disruptive chemical; look for pallets stamped with “HT” or heat treated

7 Things to Consider Before Preparing a Raised Garden Bed

1. All vegetable plants, flowers, and herbs grow well in raised garden beds but root vegetables like carrots, beets, radishes are perfect for **raised beds**, but make sure the raised beds are 12 inches deep or more. Other than these, leafy greens such as lettuce, spinach and kale are some great choices for a raised garden beds.
2. Some plants that grow well and produce higher yields in raised beds include: Tomatoes, Green Beans, Pepper Plants, Cucumbers, Carrots, Beets, Lettuce, Spinach, Kale & more.

3. You can make a raised bed as large or as small as you want. The most common size is 4 feet wide because lumber comes in 4-foot increments, making it easy to cut the width you need. Four-foot widths make it easy for you to reach across the garden bed to access weeds or veggies that need to be harvested without stepping onto the soil itself. If you make a raised bed too wide, it becomes too difficult to reach the middle. As far as the length goes, you can make your raised bed as long as you want.
4. Raised garden beds should measure 12 to 18 inches in depth, but it varies based on what is at the bottom of the bed. When situated over grass, a depth of 6 to 12 inches is sufficient. That gives the initial roots space to spread out before gradually extending into the bare earth underneath the beds. For beds placed over concrete, a minimum depth of 12 inches is needed, but more is better. Some gardeners suggest 18 inches depending on what you grow because some plants have extensive root systems.
5. The best place to put your raised bed in the area where it will receive a minimum of six hours of direct sunlight, but more is preferred if possible. If the site you select isn't level, it will need to be leveled before building the raised beds. A well-draining location is necessary because soggy, waterlogged roots increase the likelihood of root rot or other diseases.
6. Before filling in your raised bed with soil, use a garden fork or shovel to break up and loosen the dirt underneath. Try to loosen the soil six to eight inches deep down. Doing this improves drainage and moisture retention. You should also remove any rocks or large clumps of compacted soil. Any obstructions to root growth, especially for root vegetables, are problematic for your plants.
7. Place cardboard or newspaper at the bottom of the raised garden bed. Some gardeners like to put a layer of grass clippings, leaves, wood chips, or other organic materials underneath the cardboard if they built the beds over the top of concrete. Raised beds over grass don't need an organic layer underneath. Cardboard kills the grass faster by suffocating the grass and weeds.

Soil

For soil, you can either buy bulk soil or bagged soil. If using bagged soil, go for high-quality, organic soil blends. Don't use only potting soil because it is too light for raised beds on its own. A common mixture is ½ good quality topsoil mixed with ½ good quality compost. Bulk soil depends on where you buy it. Some businesses offer a premixed blend that may contain topsoil and organic matter in various proportions.

For more in-depth information: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf2134.pdf>