

Raised Bed Innovations for Veggies, Flowers, & Herbs

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Discover how to enjoy the benefits of raised bed gardening, including less weeding, watering, fertilizing and growing more productive vegetables, herbs and flowers! Techniques for raising the soil up have been improved, with new materials and solutions to make them attractive. We'll also discuss innovative raised bed designs, such as Hugelkultur, straw bale gardening, and polyculture beds.



Why Raised Beds?

- Saves Space
- Heats Up and Drains Soil Faster
- Easier to Manage
- Better Production
- Less Weeding/Fertilizing
- Easier on Your Body
- Can be portable

Free Standing vs Permanent Raised Beds

Use free standing beds when you want to:

- Redesign the bed each year
- Ease of moving materials in and out
- Not sure the beds will remain long term

Use permanent beds when you want to:

- Prevent people and animals from getting in the beds
- Need lowest maintenance beds
- Will be gardening there for a long time

Raised Beds Materials

Wood- Use thick (2" diameter) naturally rot resistant wood such as redwood, cedar and plastic woods. Avoid chemically treated woods.

Elevated Wooden Beds- Great for people with disabilities. Easy to protect from people and animals. Can be placed on casters to become mobile

Cement Blocks, Stones, Bricks...- Good for keeping the soil cool. Good long term. May need a liner to prevent soil from leaching out.

Metal- Long term solution. Use galvanized metal so doesn't rust. Heats up soil. Best with heat loving/tolerant plants.

Building Wooden Raised Beds

Size- Not wider than 4 feet, but as long as you like. If more than 8 feet long use braces to avoid bowing.

Posts- Use 2" x 2" posts in the corners to help hold the bed together

Depth- Minimum of 8- to 10-inches deep. Deeper on compacted or impervious surfaces. For elevated beds, build a false bottom 1 foot deep. Leave the rest open.

Bottom- If gophers, mice and voles are a problem, line the bottom of the bed with hardware cloth.

Seat- Consider adding a wider cap along the raised bed top for sitting.

Paths- Make paths wide enough to move wheelbarrow/cart through the garden. Mulch with landscape fabric, mulch or stone.

Maintenance

Soil- A 60:40 mix of topsoil and compost is best. Add amendments as needed.

Fertilizer- Add a layer of compost before each planting. Use organic plant foods, such as fish emulsion and alfalfa meal, as a supplement as needed.

Watering- Set up a drip or soaker hose system on a timer. Mulch to help conserve soil moisture during dry periods.

Pests- Use light weight row covers or micro-mesh draped over the bed to block insect pests. Use copper strips to stop slugs/snails. Raise beds up 3 feet tall to prevent animals from reaching the bed.

Season Extending- Protect raised beds from cold weather with row covers draped over plastic or metal hoops. Build or buy cold frames for longer term protection.

Raised Beds Alternatives

Planting- Use succession planting or try polyculture planting to extend the growing season.

Straw Bale Gardening- Plant in bales of hay or straw conditioned with water and fertilizer to grow on difficult surfaces and avoid some pests.

Hugelkultur- Make hugelkultur mounds using logs and branches with other organic materials. Create a 3- to 6-foot tall mound for long term growing.

Keyhole Beds- Make a keyhole-shaped bed to save space and build a 1- to 2-foot diameter compost bin in the middle of the bed to feed the plants.

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