

# BUILDING A RAISED BED

A raised bed is a box generally constructed of wood without a bottom that is filled with soil for planting a garden. They are often used as an option for sites with poor soil quality, for gardeners with special needs such as senior gardens (who aren't able to bend down) or youth gardens (where you want to provide clear boundaries). They can also add a nice design element in the garden providing clean straight lines.

## ADVANTAGES

- **IMPROVED DRAINAGE**- For heavy and poorly drained soils, raised beds help roots to grow above difficult soil conditions.
- **EXPANDING THE GROWING SEASON** - Soil in raised beds warms earlier in spring allowing for an earlier planting.
- **MAINTENANCE** - Because plants are growing above the level of walkways, less stooping is required for weeding, watering and other chores.
- **USING DIFFICULT SITES** - Raised beds make gardening possible where growing would otherwise be impossible such as on sites with extremely rocky soil or soil with moderate contamination. Note: Even with raised beds, it is not recommended to garden where ground lead levels exceed 320 ppm. See our flier on soil testing and good gardening practices.



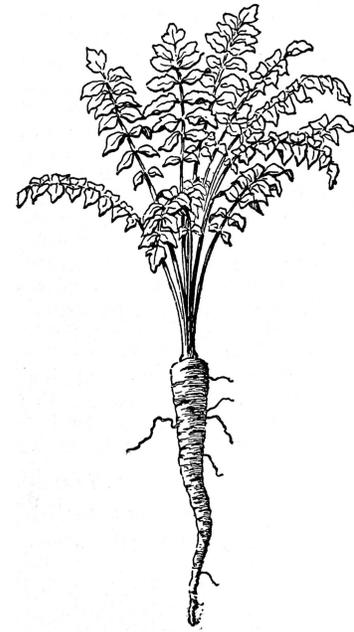
- **ACCESSIBILITY** - Raising beds to 2 feet tall makes them accessible to wheelchairs and people who have difficulty bending and kneeling. They also are a good choice for young children, and define the space where youth walk.

## DISADVANTAGES

- They can be expensive! In addition to the woods for the beds, you'll need topsoil and compost to fill the beds.
- They will dry out quicker than in ground beds because they heat up quicker and do not retain water as well.

## BUILDING AND INSTALLING A RAISED BED

- Construct your beds on a level surface.
- With the assistance of another person, hold two 4 foot boards standing up on their ends and place an 8 foot board on top of them aligning the corners.
- Secure each corner of the bed by drilling 3 pilot holes with a 1/8 inch bit and then nailing 3 nails at each corner. Flip the bed and attach the second 8 foot piece. Also, drill two pilot holes on the end boards 5/8 inch from edge.
- With bed flat and upside down, reinforce each corner with posts and 5 screws.
- Seal the wood with a water seal to increase longevity of the wood.
- Temporarily, place bed in desired spot and mark where corner posts sit in order to dig a 4 inch deep hole for each. Move bed aside and dig holes. Holes should be dug so the bed sits level and there is no gap between wood and ground.
- Cover inside of bed area with a weed block fabric such as newspaper or cardboard to smother any existing grass and weeds.
- Add soil and compost mix to bed. A 4 x 8-foot bed requires about 3/4 of a yard of mix, We recommend using a mix of 3/4 topsoil and 1/4 compost.



## MATERIALS AND TOOLS NEEDED

- 2 pieces of 2 inch by 10 inch by 8 foot untreated lumber
- 2 pieces of 2 inch by 10 inch by 4 foot untreated lumbe. (12 foot lengths are standard ask your lumber yard to cut it for you)
- 4 pieces of 2 inch by 4 inch by 14 inch untreated lumber - for corner posts
- Screws and Nails - 3 inch galvanized deck nails (12 total nails) and screws (20 total screws)
- Newspaper, cardboard or weed fabric
- Soil and compost mix to fill the bed (approximately 3/4 of a yard total)
- Water seal, like Thompsons or linseed oil
- Hammer and drill (with 1/8 inch drill bit & phillips driver bit)

