

# Raised Bed Gardening

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Gardening can be a great activity for individuals with disabilities, with some consideration to the special needs of the gardener. Raised beds provide an excellent option if the individual has the space and mobility to allow them to care for these beautiful garden plots. In planning a raised bed garden, the first step is to assess the needs of the gardener. Each raised bed garden will be different depending upon the needs and desires of the individual gardener. As a general rule though, all raised bed gardens should be easily accessible, and fit aesthetically into the surroundings. Some important points to remember in planning a raised bed are:

- Place beds in places where they will receive full sunlight for at least 6 hours per day, or, if space in sunlight is unavailable, use shade-tolerant plants.
- Raised beds will require more watering than traditional gardens, be sure to keep plants well hydrated.
- Incorporate fertilizer into the soil when the beds are first filled.
- Use mulch to cut down on evaporation of water.
- Avoid the use of chemicals in pest control.
- Be sure any materials used in the construction of the beds have not been treated, if they have, line the bed with plastic to prevent seepage into your plants.

There are several types of raised beds, consider each one carefully before selecting the one that will best meet the needs of the gardener.

***Raised Ground Beds***  
***Deep Raised Beds***  
***Terracing and Retaining Walls***  
***Elevated Beds***

Raised beds can be constructed of almost any material. Below you will find a list of the most common materials, and some advantages and disadvantages of each. It is up to the individual gardener to determine which material is best suited to their individual needs.

Once you select a type of raised bed and construction material, it is time to build the bed and prepare it for the plants you will select to grow. Soil preparation is vital to successful gardening. As stated previously, it is a good idea to add extra fertilizer to your soil when filling the bed. Once it is filled, double-digging is the best strategy to yield healthy plants. This may involve enlisting the help of a friend or hiring someone as it is a strenuous task.

Remove the top 12 inches of soil from the bed. Insert a spade or spading fork into the next 10-12 inches and wiggle the handle back and forth to break up the compacted layers, repeat this every 6-8 inches throughout the bed. Mix the topsoil with a generous amount of compost or manure and return it to the bed. It will be fluffy and several inches higher than ground level. To raise the bed to 8-10 inches, take topsoil and mix it in well.

For additional information contact your local Outreach and Extension Service or the University of Missouri-Columbia, 1.800.995.8503.

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