

# HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN RAISED BED

## BEGINNERS GUIDE TO GARDENING



# AN INTRODUCTION TO BUILDING YOUR OWN RAISED BEDS:

Welcome back for another lesson everyone! Today we're going to dive into the topic of raised beds. Whether you're eager to get stuck in and build your own now, or fancy referencing this lesson later, we'll cover everything you need to know. From the different types of raised beds to what tools you'll need to start building. We'll even share our top tips on how to keep your beds in great shape for years to come.





# KEY TERMS:

## Crop rotation:

This refers to the process of growing different plants in your raised bed each season to prevent diseases and nutrient depletion.

## Edging:

This is the term used to refer to the process of defining the borders between areas of a garden.

## Mulching

Mulching refers to the process of applying 'mulches' (commonly comprised of wood chips, leaves and other organic matter) to bare soil. It is a common practice used by gardeners that will allow your soil to retain moisture.

## Raised beds:

A gardening technique that involves planting in an area of soil that has been raised from the ground. This technique is particularly popular for growing fruit & veg.

## Square foot gardening:

This term refers to the practice of creating small, orderly sections in your plant bed (usually 4 x 4 blocks) as opposed to planting in traditional rows.



# WHAT ARE RAISED GARDEN BEDS AND WHY SHOULD YOU BUILD ONE?



Are you tired of bending over backwards to tend to your garden? We don't blame you. As much as we love getting stuck into planting, it can be a pain (literally) to constantly find yourself bent over digging into your garden. That's where raised beds come in to help. This handy gardening technique is beloved by gardeners everywhere and involves planting in a raised area of soil to avoid having to stoop down. You could even pull a chair over while you work. If that reason alone hasn't made you think about building one, then you may want to consider these other great benefits.

## **Improved drainage**

Poor drainage can be a real pain for gardeners, leading to root rot and nutrient deficiencies. However, with a raised planter you get more control over your soil and can create an environment that drains well to promote healthy plant growth. Say goodbye to soggy soil and hello to happy healthy plants.

## **Better soil quality**

You probably already know that good soil is the key to good gardening and with this gardening technique, you have the power to create the perfect blend of soil for your plants. Plus, as the soil is contained carefully in your raised bed, you'll be able to maintain its quality much easier than if planting straight into your garden.

## **Wave goodbye to weeding**

Ok, well not completely. But, if using a raised bed it's true that you are less likely to encounter pesky weeds. They have less of a chance of growing in a densely planted bed. Plus, when they do spring up they're much easier to get rid of thanks to the bed's loose, rich soil.



# DIFFERENT TYPES OF RAISED BEDS

## Wooden beds

Wooden beds, typically made from timber, are great for beginners. They are easy to build and more durable than plastic, which may crack or fade over time. But perhaps the greatest advantage of using wooden beds is that you'll be using a natural material that allows air and water to flow better, creating a healthier environment for your plants. And remember, you can stain or paint your wood to best suit your garden or keep natural for a beautiful, rustic look.



## Plastic beds

Budget-friendly, plastic beds are a great option if you don't fancy building your own. They can range anywhere in price from £25 - £150+ depending on the size and quality. Plus, they come in a range of finishes, so you can choose what style and colour best suits your garden.

## Stone or concrete beds

Beds made from stone or concrete blocks are a great choice if you prefer a more industrial look. Plus, they are a great option for those who live in areas that see extreme weather. Concrete can withstand extreme heat and cold, plus it won't be knocked over in high winds. Concrete beds also help with pest control, as pesky little insects won't be able to dig their way in. However, if you want to make your own raised bed and you don't have a lot of experience working with concrete, you may need to seek out some help, as this building process can get a bit more complicated.

# TOOLS YOU'LL NEED TO GET STARTED



So, if you think you're ready to build a simple raised bed you'll need to consider what tools you'll need. The specifics may vary depending on which type of bed you'll be building, but the following list should be enough to help you get started.

- Measuring tape
- Spirit level
- Mallet
- Screws
- Screwdriver
- Work gloves





# HOW TO BUILD A RAISED BED IN 6 SIMPLE STEPS:

This step-by-step guide will take you through all the steps you'll need to start your very own diy raised garden. For beginners, we recommend building a simple wooden bed.

## **Step 1: Choose your location**

- Starting simply, choose where you would like your raised bed to sit in your garden. Remember to pick a location that is easily accessible, as you'll have to get in to water your plants often. It's also important that the area you pick receives plenty of natural sunlight (at least 6 hours a day). If building on top of concrete as opposed to grass, you should know that you'll need to add a good drainage system to ensure that your plants don't get waterlogged. This may involve adding holes to your bed to let the water escape or adding a layer of gravel at the bottom of your garden bed. If you don't want to worry about this, we recommend building on top of grass– but make sure that it is clear of debris and the ground is even.

## **Step 2: Get measuring**

- Next, you will need to measure the area you have chosen. The size of your planter really depends on how much space you have to work with, but typically they are 4 x 8 feet long (1.22 x 2.44 m) and at least 8 inches deep.

## **Step 3: Gather your materials and cut lumber to size**

- Once you have marked out your space, you'll need to gather all the tools you need to start building. Use the guide we have given above as a starting point. You'll also need to choose what type of wood you want to use. We recommend using cedar as it's rot-resistant and long-lasting and will last much longer than alternatives. But, no matter what kind of wood you choose, you'll next need to cut the planks to size using the measurements of your raised bed as a guide.



# HOW TO BUILD A RAISED BED IN 6 SIMPLE STEPS:

## **Step 4: Assemble the frame**

- Once your planks of wood are cut and ready to go, assemble your frame. Place the boards on their sides and use heavy-duty coach screws and a rubber mallet to secure. Once your rectangular frame is secured, use a spirit level to check that it's even.

## **Step 5: Fill with soil**

- Now that the hardest part is done, it's time to fill your beds with garden soil. Add compost too, to ensure that it is enriched for whatever you will be planting. You'll need sufficient soil depth to root deeply, so make sure that your soil depth is at least 8 inches, this will ensure that your plants thrive.

## **Step 6: Get planting and enjoy!**

- Whether you're creating the vegetable garden of your dreams or using your raised bed to experiment with planting, it's now time to get your seedlings ready and have some fun. No matter what you want to grow, once you've finished this project you'll be ready for growing season right away. Remember that weeding and harvesting is incredibly important, so make sure to keep on top of this!



# WHAT CAN I GROW IN RAISED BEDS:

So, you've just finished building your new raised bed – well done! Now comes the fun part...choosing what to plant. Whatever you wish to grow, from your favourite blooms to herbs that will liven up any dish, raised beds are great for bringing many different plants to life. Check out our list below for some inspiration.

## Flowers

- Roses
- Petunias
- Pansies
- Marigolds
- Sunflowers
- Sweet peas
- Lavender
- Tulips
- Daffodils



## Fruit

- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Currants
- Blackberries
- Gooseberries
- Cherries
- Vegetables
- Onions
- Radishes
- Spinach
- Carrots
- Tomatoes
- Beetroot
- Peas
- Lettuce



## Herbs

- Rosemary
- Chives
- Thyme
- Sage
- Basil
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Tarragon

# MAINTENANCE TIPS:

Once you've got your raised bed sitting proudly in your garden and have started planting, there are a few things you may want to take note of to keep your diy raised bed in tip-top shape.

## **Water, water, water!**

Although this may seem obvious, it's important that you remember that raised beds can dry out much quicker than topsoil in your garden. So, check the moisture of your soil each day (perhaps even more frequently during the summer). If you consider yourself particularly forgetful or plan to be away from your garden for a few days, you may want to think about installing a drip irrigation system. This system will deliver the right amount of water via small pipes, without you having to do a thing.

## **Don't forget to mulch...**

Speaking of watering...once you've finished planting, it's important that you mulch with straw, leaves or wood chips. A 2-3 inch layer works best and will mean that you won't have to water your plants as much. Not only will the mulch work to keep your soil moist but it will also reduce the amount of weeding you'll have to do, as the mulch will block their access to sunlight, stopping them from growing.

## **Get a handle on pesky pests**

After putting in all that effort to plan, build and plant, you'll want to make sure you keep pests out of your beloved raised bed. You can do this by placing mesh, fabric or fencing over your beds to prevent them from gaining access to your plants. You should also invest in some natural pesticides like vegetable oil spray (great for deterring aphids and mites) or a vinegar solution (helps to eradicate slugs and snails). Remember to visit your garden regularly to check for signs of pests, before they can damage your entire crop.