

About Raised Bed Gardens

Is a raised bed garden right for you?

Introduction to Raised Beds

A raised bed garden is a built structure that elevates the surface of the garden above the ground level to achieve a more favorable condition for growing food. A raised bed garden may help with appearances, create helpful boundaries, limit weeds, increase porosity, and drainage, help with physical abilities, protect vegetables from contaminated or severely damaged soil, limit erosion, etc.



Figure 1: A raised bed made from 2 x 12" pine boards and metal stakes. Source: <http://www.rodalesorganiclife.com/>

However, a raised bed garden may not be needed in every circumstance especially when an in-ground bed is suitable. Below are some advantages of a raised bed garden along with some thoughtful considerations.

Advantages & When to Use a Raised Bed

- To maintain order, tidiness, and appearances
- To facilitate community garden spaces
- To protect plants from contaminated ground soil
- To control soil quality
- To grow plants more intensely
- To better control weeds (at least, initially)
- To improve porosity and drainage
- To provide easier physical access when working in the garden

Need Help with Your Raised Bed?

Contact the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and schedule a free site visit for assistance.

Things to Consider with Raised Bed Gardens

- There is a loss of flexibility in the garden space – hard to move or reconfigure
- Depending on the size of the raised bed, there could be limited space for sprawling plants
- There is a higher financial, labor, and maintenance cost
- Most materials will have a lifespan, knowing about how long that is and how to dispose of it ahead of time is helpful for planning purposes
- A raised bed will tend to dry out quicker which means additional watering may be required
- It is more difficult to rotate crops from season to season which could increase disease and pest problems in the future

Additional Resource

Eartheasy: Basics, Building, and Installing a Raised Bed Garden
http://eartheasy.com/grow_raised_beds.htm

Alabama Coop: Raised Bed Gardening
<http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1345/ANR-1345.pdf>

References

Frost, S. (n.d.). *Advantages & Disadvantages of Raised Beds*. Retrieved January 5, 2017, from Living the Bump: <http://living.thebump.com/advantages-disadvantages-raised-beds-6142.html>