How To Set Up Your Own

Raised Garden Bed

Raising your own garden bed could just be the new activity that you're looking for this summer. Nothing makes a home more "self-sufficient" than having your own garden space to grow fresh vegetables and flowers. In this simple step-by-step guide, you will learn what kind of material to use, how large your space should be, and how to build the ideal garden bed.

Building the Garden Bed

For the bed frame, the size is up to you as it would depend on how big you want it to be, but going with 2 x 4s on top of the ground is usually the standard. Just make sure the bed is at least 6 inches high to give your roots plenty of space to grow. The following instructions will describe building a 4-foot by 6-foot by 10-1/2-inch bed with 2 x 4 untreated lumber.

Instructions

1. First off, measure and mark the length of the walls. Then, cut the boards and the 2 x 4s for corner posts to support the walls. You can also cut posts to install along the walls to increase its foundational strength.

2. Clamp the boards together for each wall and then set the corner posts on top of the wall boards. Flush it with the ends of the 6-foot walls and set it back an inch from the ends of the shorter walls. Finally, drill pilot holes and then screw the posts. If you have extra posts, attach them along the walls as well.
3. Drill pilot holes and connect all the sides with screws to form a box. Just remember that the posts should be on the inside of the bed.

What Type of Wood to Use?

The type of wood you choose is ultimately up to you, but if you're having trouble deciding which one you should go with, continue reading for a detailed explanation of each type of wood:

- If you want the best wood in the market, we recommend going with cedar or redwood as they are naturally water-resistant. However, they are also expensive and can be hard to find.
- For a budget-friendly option, hemlock, fir, and pine are affordable enough but aren't as long-lasting as cedar and redwood.
- Lastly, you can also use pressure-treated lumber. It can stand against rot, decay, and wood-ingesting insects but be aware that this type of lumber undergoes chemical pressure treatment.
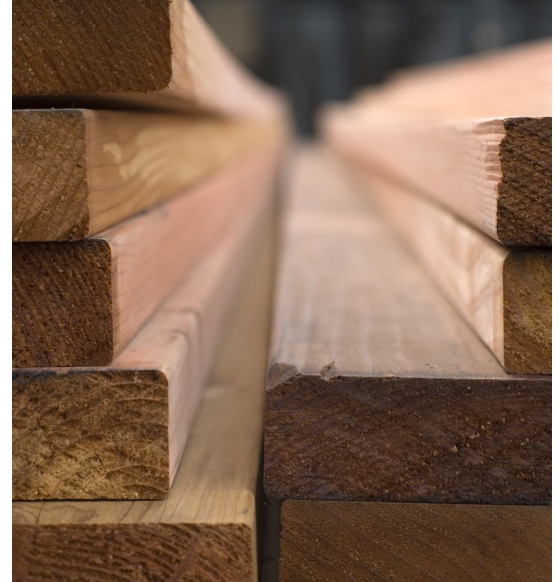
Additional Guidelines

- You know the golden rule! Always wear work gloves, a dust mask, and eye protection when handling or cutting wood.
- Dispose sawdust and waste properly.
- If the wood isn't rot-resistant, staple heavy-duty plastic along the inside walls before adding the soil.
- As mentioned above, a lot of caution is needed when using pressure-treated lumber, but you should always wash your hands after working with said wood and avoid burning or using it as much.

Preparing the Location

Instructions

1. Once you've picked the location of your garden bed, place the frame and outline it with a shovel or spade. Setting up the bed on the ground is recommended as it allows proper root growth and drainage compared to hard surfaces such as concrete.
2. Second, clean up the area by removing the grass and then loosening the dirt with a spade. This allows the roots to grow deeper into the ground.
3. Staple wide-mesh hardware cloth to the bottom of the frame to keep weeds out. Then, set the bed in place. You can also use landscape fabric or even a newspaper as an alternative to block weed growth.
4. Put heavy-duty plastic along the inside walls to keep the wood from rotting. Once done, you can add some finishing touches to the frame.

Adding Soil and Plants

1. Now that you've built your garden bed, it's time to plant, plant, plant! Start by filling the bed with nutrient-rich soil and compost, whether it's homemade or store-bought.
2. And finally, just water the soil! It's better to do it in the morning when less water evaporates in the sun.

What to Plant in Raised Beds?

You can plant a wide variety of fruits and vegetables; from carrots to onions to herbs. With your new garden bed, your crops will grow much more organically as it is much looser and has better control of soil additions. Read below for a list of suggestions for you to plant:

- Root vegetables (eg. carrots, radishes, beets)
- Leaf vegetables (eg. kale, lettuce, spinach)
- Melons (eg. cantaloupe, watermelon, pumpkins)
- Onions
- Tomatoes
- Herbs (eg. cilantro, mint, oregano)