

Raised Beds for Vegetable Crops

A raised bed is a garden bed raised above the soil. It is usually 2-4 ft. wide, 2-24 in. high, as long as desired, and flat on top.

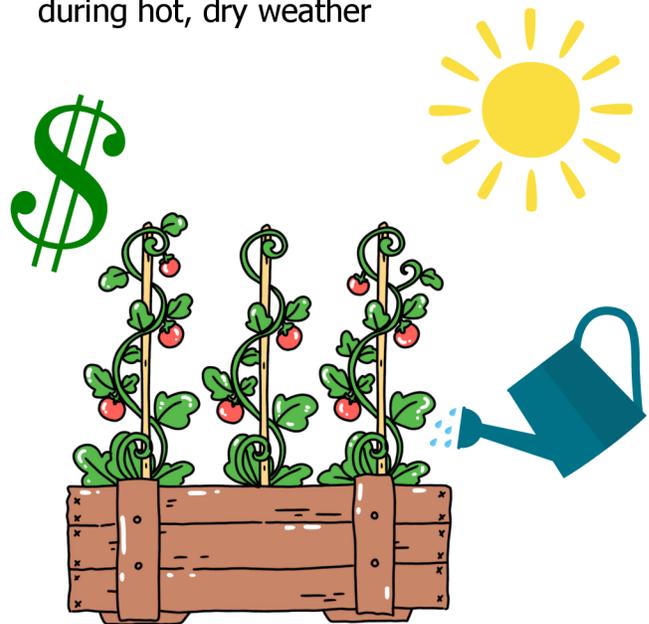
Benefits of raised beds

- Deeper soil means more space for roots to grow, resulting in stronger plants and higher yields
- You'll stand or kneel in the paths when working in the raised beds. The soil is more productive because footsteps do not compact it.
- Fertilizer, compost, and water are focused just on the beds and not wasted on walkways
- Drain well and warm up sooner in spring so you can plant earlier
- Create a neat look with defined paths around the beds



Disadvantages of raised beds

- Expense to buy or build
- May need more frequent watering during hot, dry weather



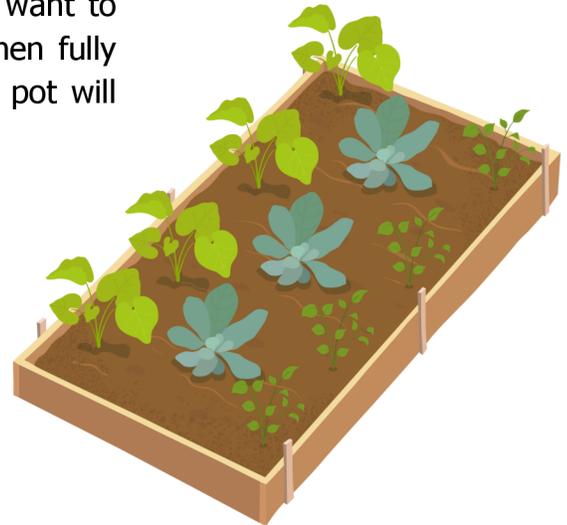
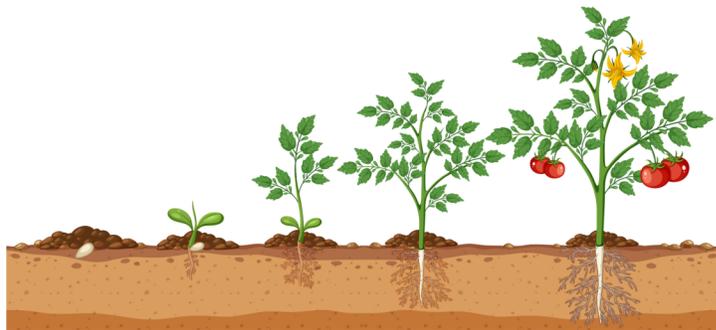
Raised beds are often surrounded by wood or plastic boards, galvanized metal, stones, or other rigid materials. You can use repurposed materials like discarded concrete blocks or bricks or skip the expense and work of building an enclosure by creating a 4-6 in. raised bed with sloped sides.



Once your raised bed is in place, fill it with a mixture of compost and garden soil or purchased topsoil. You can remove the top 4 inches of topsoil from the path around the raised bed and add it to the mix. You may be able to find local garden centers or nurseries that sell topsoil mixed with compost. If using existing garden soil, have it tested (including a lead test) by sending a sample to a [soil testing laboratory](#).



Learn the size of the “footprint” of the vegetables you want to grow—the amount of space your plants will take up when fully grown. An 8-in. tall tomato transplant grown in a 4-in. pot will grow into a 6-ft. tall plant, taking up 2-3 ft. of space.



Filling your raised bed with 6-8 inches of soil and compost will smother any grass and weeds. They will decompose in place adding organic matter to the soil.

Or you can kill grass and weeds by covering the planned garden space with a single overlapping layer of cardboard or sections of newspaper and then spreading compost and soil on top. Plant roots will grow through the decomposing cardboard or newspaper into the soil below.



Learn more:

Web pages- go.umd.edu/FoodGardening

Blog articles-

<https://marylandgrows.umd.edu/?s=vegetables>

Videos- <https://www.youtube.com/UMDHGIC>

Get answers to your gardening questions-
go.umd.edu/AskExtension

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