

RAISE THE BED, PLANT YOUR GARDEN

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Perhaps one of the easiest vegetable gardens to manage is one cultured in a raised bed. Raised bed gardens are those that are bordered and contained within some type of open structure made from wood, concrete, plastic, hay, or other materials. This type of gardening arrangement offers easy cultivation of your crops from all sides without having to step on the soil, great drainage and an attractive feature in your landscape.

You can actually make a simple raised bed by hilling up your soil into a four-foot wide by say 10 foot long mound. This will be temporary at best as weather and time erode the sides of the bed. A parameter of rocks can line a bed and help provide a wall of sorts. I have also seen hay bales used to form the walls of the bed which can make a nice temporary, but attractive raised garden. Concrete blocks, cut stone, or bricks are also very useful materials to build more permanent raised beds. However, perhaps the most common material used to construct raised beds is wood. Most natural lumber other than redwood or red cedar will begin to rot in 12 months or so. In the past, wood was preserved



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with chromated copper arsenate (CCA) which posed some potential concerns related to soil and ground water contamination. In 2004 the Environmental Protection Agency removed chromated copper arsenate from residential markets. New copper-based preservatives have now replaced CCA pressure-treated wood and are considered safe to use. Synthetic wood made from recycled plastic is another alternative. Raised bed kits that are ready to assemble are also available and offer easy set-up.

Once you have chosen your raised bed building material, prepare the site where you plan to build it by clearing the spot of grass, weeds and stones. It is best to keep raised beds no more

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Allison can help educate you about the FYN Program so you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

CONTACT A MASTER GARDENER

on the Plant Lifeline from 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 764.4340 or by email <u>Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com</u>.

You can also visit them at one of our many Plant Clinics around the county: http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/PlantClinics.pdf that four feet wide so that you can easily access all sides without actually having to climb into the bed. The length is up to you and your available space. The height of the bed should be between 12-24 inches. Use a good soil mix to fill the bed. A mix containing well-rotted compost, peat moss, Perlite and course sand will work well. You can also use pre-made potting soil as long as you mix it with top soil. It will take about one and one-half cubic yards of soil to fill a 10 foot by four foot raised bed to a height of 12 inches.

You can attach accessories to your raised bed in the form of trellises to add additional height dimension for vine crops. Hoops made from plastic water pipe can also be constructed over the raised bed so that they can be used to hold netting if crop damage from birds is a problem.

Whether you have a large or small yard, raised bed gardening is the way to go. Attractive and potentially productive year round, I encourage you to try raised bed gardening as your next outdoor horticulture adventure!

Resources:

- McLaughlin, J. (2005) A Word or Two About Gardening – In Miami-Dade Think Raised Bed Gardening. Miami-Dade County UF/IFAS Extension Service.

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