



How to install a *Raised Container Garden Bed*:

Step One: Select your site. It is important to place your raised garden bed on a flat surface or if uneven dig into the ground a bit so that once full of soil the planting surface level is flat. If growing herbs, growing vegetables, or sun loving flowers, select a site that receives as much sunlight as available. Ideal is 7-8 hours per day. For convenience, try to choose an area that is accessible to water and has room for you to easily maneuver.

Step Two: Determine the size and shape of your raised garden. Be sure you can access your entire garden without stepping into the bed. It is best if you keep the width to 4 feet or less to reach all plants without compacting the soil. This is why we offer beds that are 4 feet or less on the shortest side; Any length is okay. As for depth, six inches will support most vegetables. Deeper is okay but consider the cost of purchasing soil. Too much depth could add more to the cost than necessary. If you have good subsoil (without excess clay, rocks or contaminants), you can loosed the soil with a shovel to increase the dept by an additional 3-6 inches.

Step Three: Prep your site. Most plants will do fine in 6 -8 inches of depth, so to save time and labor you may create a weed barrier by placing newspaper, natural fiber fabric or cardboard directly on the bottom of your bed to be covered with soil. If your plants like deeper soil, dig out the existing sod and loosen the soil with shovel or garden fork by an additional 3-6 inches.

Step Four: Construct your raised plant bed. Follow the included instructions for constructing the bed. This DIY container garden will arrive in a box that has 4 pre-constructed sides and two screws for each side. Simple place the abutting sides together and hand screw the screws into the predrilled holes. There are 2 screws for each side, totaling 8 screws; it's as easy as that.

Step Five: Garden designs and leveling your frames. Lay out your garden bed or garden beds with consideration to plant height, maximum sun exposure, companion planting and accessibility between your garden beds. Using a level, make sure the frame is level in all directions.

Step Seven: Selecting soil, adding minerals and organic nutrients. For best growing vegetables in containers it is beneficial to add and aged compost to add loamy texture and an fully decomposed manure or mushroom compost as a rich source of nutrients. Such composted soils generally contain most minerals though it can be helpful to add granite dust if micro and trace minerals are suspected to be low.

- pH should be neutral to slightly alkaline for optimal mineral absorption. Calcium and other alkalizing minerals are often helpful. If deficient, plant stress conditions are identified by the leaf characteristics and its vulnerability to disease.
- Heavy feeders and fruiting plants such as tomatoes and melons, require greater amounts of macronutrients, particularly nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. These are read as NPK on the soil bags. Blood meal, fish meal and composted manure provide lots of nitrogen.

Phosphorus is important for flower gardening and fruiting plants and should be given prior to the stage of budding. Chicken manure and bone meal are good organic additives.

- Low to moderate feeding plants including herbs, such as basil, chives and parsley plus leafy green lettuces and strawberries require only a modest amount of nitrogen and phosphorus.

Step Six: Adding Soil to Your Beds. If you are using your own compost or topsoil, be sure that the compost was fully aged and that it does not likely have live seeds that will become weeds in your vegetable garden bed. If you have a rich, loamy soil from under a tree or under an old woodpile this will make a great amendment to existing subsoil or purchased topsoil. Adding a store bought nutrient rich organic composted such as mushroom or animal manure will give added nitrogen and phosphorus for plant growth and flowering. To be sure your plants are organic, do not use fertilizer or soil that has fertilizer added, including non-organic brands such as “Miracle Grow”. Once filled and leveled you are ready to plant seedlings or sow seeds. Once your plants start to take hold, it’s good to add a layer of leaves, straw or compost to the top of your soil to keep the soil moist and protected from hard rain.

Growing Organic Vegetable Gardens

Raised bed gardening requires very little maintenance. Once a year it’s a good idea to top dress your bed with fresh compost or aged manure. Go ahead and dig the new soil into the soil several inches. Mulching several inches will help retain moisture, reduce weeds and prevent root compaction. Raised beds tend to dry out faster than in-ground beds so it’s good to use mulch for moisture retention.

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