

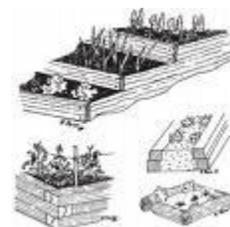


## RAISED BED GARDENING



### GARDENING IN RAISED BEDS IS IDEAL BECAUSE:

- Soil in beds stays loose and well aerated - ideal for plant roots.
- The soil warms up earlier in the spring.
- Paths around the beds keep feet clean because gardeners work in beds without walking in them; this eliminates soil compaction.
- More vegetables can be grown per unit area than in row gardens.
- Soil amendments, fertilizer and water are applied only to the beds, saving time and money.
- Weeding is easier; hand weeding and light hoeing is usually adequate.
- You can still have a garden even if you have a lot of rocks and little soil.



### BEDS CAN BE ANY SHAPE AND SIZE

Squares, rectangles, even triangles or circles (most are rectangular)

- A 4-foot wide bed is comfortable for most gardeners to reach from either side. Make the bed narrower if children are helping, or if you can only reach from one side.
- If you plan to use a rototiller on the beds after the permanent paths are established, choose a bed width that will accommodate your machine.
- Bed length can be as short or as long as you like, but eight feet is a convenient size.
- Beds that are 4 feet by 25 feet will provide more space in larger gardens. 4 x 25 is a 100 square foot area, which is usually the application rate for many fertilizer and garden products (such as 3 lbs. per 100 sq. ft.).

### PATHS BETWEEN THE BEDS

- 1½ to 2-foot wide paths are comfortable walking spaces for most people.
- If you plan to push a wheelbarrow along the paths, make the path wide enough to keep wheelbarrows from damaging plants.
- Grass paths must be mowed. Measure the width of the lawn mower and make your path a size that makes mowing convenient. Grass paths work better with contained beds, as the grass will invade open mounds.
- Paths can be nothing more than bare dirt, which packs down as they are walked on repeatedly each year.
- Paths can be mulched with several layers of newspaper covered with bark or straw.
- For a more formal appearance, construct paths with bricks or cement.

## LOCATION OF GARDEN

- Choose a location that gets at least 6 hours of sunlight per day (the more the better).
- Place the garden away from tree and shrub roots, which will compete with vegetable plants for water and nutrients.
- Lay out beds so that the length will run north to south. This allows for minimum shading of short plants.

## TYPES OF BEDS

***Open Mound Beds:*** These are called unconstructed beds and do not have sides. An open mound bed may be raised above ground level 6 inches or more.

- Mark the bed with stakes and string. Use a rake or hoe to mound soil up in beds.
- Add soil amendments and fertilizers and spade in.
- Level the top of the bed with the back of a rake. Sides should slope at a 45-degree angle.

***Contained or Constructed Beds:*** Raised beds can be constructed with untreated landscape lumber, cement blocks, bricks, rock, etc. Gardeners can avoid treated wood by using rot resistant alternatives such as plastic lumber or redwood.

- The height of a raised bed can vary from six inches to a height that can be reached by a person in a wheelchair.
- If additional soil is needed for these beds, "three-way mixes" can be bought from businesses listed under "Landscape Supplies" in the phone book. Many outlets will deliver this mix or you can purchase it by the yard and have it loaded into your vehicle.

## AMENDING THE SOIL

- Amend soil in beds with organic matter to improve the soil. Use pre-moistened peat moss, bagged steer manure or compost in the spring.
- Spread approximately 3 to 4 inches of amendments over the beds and spade or rototill in 8 to 12 inches deep.
- After harvest, chopped up vegetable matter and leaves as well as grass clippings can be spread over the beds and spaded in 8 to 12 inches deep.

**WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.**

***For more information contact WSU Chelan County Extension Master Gardeners at (509) 667-6540 or <http://www.ncw.edu/mg/chelanmg.html>***

Adapted by Chelan County Master Gardeners from WSU Spokane County Master Gardener publication C143.