

Raised Bed Gardening Benefits

Control Your Soil Health Working in-ground may have soil challenges, while raised beds offer control for optimal plant growth. When you're working directly in-ground, you deal with what's there. The soil may be too acidic or alkaline. It may be straight clay or sand. Erosion may be an issue. Your soil might be deficient in organic matter and nutrients. Or you may have layers of landscape fabric and rock to battle with. Raised beds allow you to create the environment for growing your desired plants. Simply fill them with quality soil and top off with compost, then find out what your plants crave. Enriching in-ground soil is possible, but it can be a long process. Raised beds allow you to manipulate the nutrients easily and tweak the growing conditions so your plants will thrive.

Increase Drainage Raised beds offer solutions for waterlogged clay and dry sandy soil by providing improved drainage. Very few plants will thrive sitting in soggy soil, which leads to rotted roots. If wet soil is a problem, raised beds make adding amendments like sand and perlite easier to keep water and nutrients mobile. Overwatered plants are a top cause of gardening failures. Raised beds allow for optimal drainage, allowing water to flow freely to roots and out the bottom. The higher the bed, the better the drainage. Alternatively, those with lots of sand may struggle with retaining moisture. Completely dried-out soil with no ability to hold on to moisture will lead to desiccated, thirsty plants. For dry soils, raised beds are easy to enrich with compost and mulch to retain moisture.

Lengthen your Season Raised beds extend the gardening season in short-season areas by allowing earlier planting. If you live somewhere with a short season you can plant earlier in the season with raised beds because the soil will dry out and warm up more quickly. In the fall, raised beds make it easy to protect your crops from early cold snaps with frost cloth or floating row covers.

Give Your Body a Break Raised beds offer a comfortable and accessible gardening experience, reducing strain on the body. You can adjust the height and position of your beds to meet your own needs so that you can reach your plants easily. The elderly and those with limited mobility can sit in a chair to tend plants.

Reduce Weed Pressure Raised beds could give you more actual gardening time by reducing weed pressure. Those that spread via rhizomes won't get into the beds, and the new, weed seed-free soil you use to fill them isn't already populated with a new generation of weeds. The soil is less compacted, more nutrient-dense, and can be intensely planted. All of these factors make raised beds less hospitable to weeds. Always garden organically and avoid pesticides and herbicides. If a stray weed does show up, it's easy to spot and pull, unlike the back-breaking work of managing them in the ground.

No Till Gardening

Raised beds eliminate the need for tilling, as they can be amended with new layers of nutrient-rich material. And no till gardening reduces the carbon footprint! Unfortunately, tilling also damages soil structure and disturbs the microorganisms that help create healthy soil. Raised beds,

easily amended yearly by adding a new top layer, make tilling completely unnecessary. Instead of pulling weeds you can clip off spent plants at dirt level, leaving the roots behind to decompose, nourishing and aerating the soil. In the fall, cover the beds with chopped leaves. In spring, refresh with a layer of compost and mulch. Every year, the layers of nutrient-rich material you add on top of your raised beds will further enhance and refresh soil health, allowing the structure and microbial activity to improve over time.

Create a Neat Appearance Raised beds naturally can create a structured area surrounded by intentional pathways. They look crisp and neat, making creating an aesthetically pleasing garden easy.

Pest Control Raised beds make it easier to keep pests out of your garden. Tall beds will slow down slugs and deter rabbits. Voles are impeded when the bottom of beds are lined with a reliable mesh. Dogs can't raise their legs to pee on your vegetables. If flea beetles and whiteflies plague you, it's easy to throw row covers over your veggies when they're nicely tucked into a raised bed. While raised bed gardening won't cancel out pests, it puts a big dent in the problem.

Flexible Raised beds offer maximum flexibility, allowing portable options for renters and the ability to garden in any setting. You can choose portable, durable, raised beds that can go with you anytime you move. Small raised beds are convenient for apartment balconies or pocket-sized patios. If you do have a permanent residence, raised beds help you avoid root competition from large trees and shrubs. You can place them wherever there is the most direct sun (6-8 hours is best) and make the best use of the space you're working with.

Avoid Compacted Soil Raised beds with pathways prevent soil compaction, ensuring optimal drainage and oxygenation for plants.

Contain Aggressive Plants Raised beds effectively control aggressive plants like mint, kale, and oregano. Growing herbs in raised beds, as well as other aggressive plants, helps keep these plants contained. Raised garden beds keep aggressive plants manageable while making their abundance look lush and purposeful rather than out of control.

Avoid Contaminated Soil Raised beds provide a solution for gardening in areas with contaminated soil. Whether your garden is on an old orchard site recovering from pesticide use or in any area exposed to environmental pollutants, raised beds make it possible to garden safely where you are. Remember to conduct a soil test if you are concerned you might have contaminated soil, and use raised beds if there's any question, especially for food gardens.

Increase Your Production Raised bed gardening increases yield through intensive planting, healthier plants, and stronger root development. Increased yield is one of the major advantages of raised bed gardening. Raised beds allow you to plant intensively, with more plants per square foot. You won't have to walk on beds to harvest them, eliminating the space usually reserved for pathways and rows and avoiding soil compaction. You get healthier plants when you can actively influence the soil quality and nutrient availability in a raised bed. Root development is stronger in the loose, oxygenated soil, and production increases. Studies indicate that raised bed growing

can increase yield by 30-50%, depending on the crop and growing medium used. In a small home garden, this makes a big difference!

Facilitate Crop Rotation Raised beds simplify crop rotation, enabling organized tracking of plantings and systematic rotation. Diseases and pests bank on their host plants growing in the same spot from year to year. Diseases can remain in the soil or on decomposing plant matter, ready to strike again the following spring. Pests lay eggs or pupate in the soil, overwintering to feed on their favorite plants next season. Crop rotation prevents pests and diseases from getting too comfortable in one spot by changing up what you plant in each area. What does this have to do with raised beds? They make it easy to track and rotate your crops. Just jot down what you planted in each bed to help you organize each year's rotation. Soon you'll have an easy rotation to follow that you can keep going indefinitely, making your garden less hospitable to pests and disease.

Save Water Raised beds save water by enabling precise root-level watering using efficient drip irrigation. Many lawn sprinklers water the garden indiscriminately, watering weeds and bare areas as much as your veggies. Raised beds allow you to concentrate your water directly to your desired plants at the root level where hydration is most needed. Drip irrigation is more water-wise than sprinklers and hose wands and is easier to set up in a raised bed. While raised beds may dry out more often, the water you use drains well, and retention is improved via organic matter and mulch.

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