BUILDING A BED

THE SCOOP:
Building a simple raised bed is the easiest and most effective way for beginning gardeners to learn the trade. Here at Grow Food Grow Hope, we recommend starting out with a 12'x4' raised bed. You can build walls for your bed using cedar boards or you can simply till an area and start mounding up your soil.

Here’s how it works:

Plants thrive in loose, moist and nutrient rich soils. A raised bed allows you to control your soil quality by building a healthy medium for your plants over a couple of seasons rather than planting directly into the hard, clumpy and compacted soil of your lawn and hoping for the best.

Compacted, clayey and sticky soils, simply do not provide enough room for plants roots to develop completely. Rather than having a plant that uses its roots to reach every bit of nutrient throughout a bed, you end up with stunted plants whose roots can’t grow out much past their base. That can severely limit the amount of food they can take in and inhibit a plant’s ability to grow healthy fruits or stalks.

A raised bed will also have better drainage and protect your young plants from drowning during a hard rain. And, while every gardener has to deal with weeds at one time or another, a raised bed will help you keep them under control.

A 12'x4' bed will give you almost 50 square feet of growing room, enough for an experienced gardener to grow about 150 lbs. of vegetables, or about half of what the normal person eats in fresh produce in a year. You probably won’t reach this goal in your first year, or first couple years of growing, but keep that goal in mind as you work to develop your skills as a gardener.

As you continue to work and develop your skills as a gardener, you can begin to experiment with more intensive and more advanced techniques. But even then, it’s important for every gardener to remember that nothing beats a good raised bed for keeping your garden well organized, easily accessible and very productive.

WOOD FRAME? OR NO WOOD FRAME?

Wood Frame

- Looks Nicer
- Easier to Manage
- Less Weeds
- More Permanent
- Better Drainage
- Protected from Mowing

No Frame (Open Raised Bed)

- Cheaper
- Less Upkeep
- Easy to Expand
- Tillable
- Moundable
STEPS FOR BUILDING A WOOD FRAME RAISED BED

1) GATHER YOUR MATERIALS

Material List: 4 wooden stakes, string, 2 twelve foot 2x6 cedar boards, 2 four foot 2x6 cedar boards, 8 galvanized screws, drill, shovel or tiller.

2) PICK A GOOD LOCATION

Pick a location: Pick a spot that is accessible, receives good sunlight, is not under large trees or near competing plants, has good drainage, and which is near a watering source.

3) MEASURE YOUR PLOT

Measure your plot: Measure out the four corners and the center point for your bed. 12'x4' is large enough to meet your needs without being too much to handle. This size bed will allow you to be able to reach all the way across it without having to step in the bed and smoosh your soil or disturb your plants.
4) DIG OUT YOUR AREA

Dig your space: Next, dig or till out the area where your bed will sit. This will allow for better drainage and encourage worms and beneficial microbes to travel up into your bed.

5) LAY YOUR FRAME

Build your frame: Lay your boards out so that they line up end-to-end. Have a friend hold the ends of the boards as you screw them together. Use at least 2 screws for each corner.

6) CLEAN 'ER UP!

Clean 'er up: Set the frame over the area you prepared and place it how you need. If you want to reinforce your frame, you can hammer in rebar or metal stakes on all four sides to keep it from shifting.

*For building a no frame raised bed, follow the same instructions simply skipping step number 5.*