

Building a Raised Bed

When it came time to build new raised beds for the [Organic Gardening Test Garden](#) last spring, the executive director of the Rodale Institute, where our test garden is located, recommended a simple design. Mark Smallwood—“Coach,” as he’s known around the Institute—showed us how to build a raised bed using four pieces of untreated framing lumber, with not a scrap of waste. Each bed requires:

- Three 2-by-12 boards, 8 feet long
- One 2-by-4 board, 8 feet long
- 21/2-inch galvanized deck screws (approximately 28 screws)

When purchasing lumber, inspect it for straightness. Straighter boards will result in tighter corners. Cut one of the 2-by-12 boards in half to make two 4-foot lengths; these will be the two end pieces.



Cut the 2-by-4 board into one 4-foot length, to serve as a center brace, and four 1-foot lengths for corner supports. The two uncut boards will become the sides of the raised bed.



After drilling pilot holes, attach one of the side boards to an end board with three evenly spaced screws.



Place one of the corner supports in the angle between the boards and attach it to the side board with three screws. Repeat for the remaining three corners.



Attach the center brace to join the two sides at their midpoints. Use a square to position the brace at a right angle to the sides (5). The brace prevents the sides from bowing outward when the bed is filled with soil.



The finished bed measures 4 feet by 8 feet—a size that makes seed sowing, weeding, and harvesting easy—and raises the planting level by almost a foot. The wood can be stained, if desired. We liked Coach’s raised beds so much, we built 10 of them for the garden. —Doug Hall

Why Garden in Raised Beds?

- The soil can be liberally supplemented with compost and other organic amendments, creating a rich and porous root zone that nurtures plants.
- The bed sides act as an edging, helping to keep out weeds and turfgrass.
- Many gardeners, including those of restricted mobility, find that the slightly higher soil level facilitates maintenance.
- The elevated soil of raised beds drains quickly and doesn’t become waterlogged, and it warms up earlier in spring. (Although those two characteristics are beneficial in cool, rainy climates, gardeners in hot, dry regions may consider them to be negatives.)

Source: <http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/how-to-build-a-raised-bed?page=0,1>