

## Container Gardening and Raised Beds

### Benefits

- Reduced Weeding
- Easy on the back!
- Can put containers close to the house
- Even if your yard soil is terrible, you can be successful!
- If you are planning on moving soon, you can take your container garden with you!

### Growing in Containers and Large Pots

- Pots of a size 2 to 3 gallons are well suited to greens and herbs.
- You can put on your deck, patio, or front steps for convenience.
- May have to water frequently, maybe daily.
- Use plenty of compost in your mix, and remember to fertilize twice a month!
- Pots of a larger size (5 to 7 gallons) are suited to larger plants, but we haven't had good luck with things that vine or spread aggressively, like watermelon. Tomatoes need a minimum of 10 gallons to really achieve good results. They need lots of root space.
- Try unusual things in containers – Lemon trees, fig bushes, blueberries, or dwarf fruit trees. These would require larger pots – 20+ gallons in size.

### Raised Bed Gardening

- Ideal Height – Is your goal to sit on the side wall, or be able to stand up and pick?
  - Taller = more soil, which is expensive
  - Shorter = better connection with the underlying soil, which can be good.
  - Ideal seems to be 8” to 16”.
  - 8” is good for general purpose beds, but you will still need to kneel to garden.
  - 16” is good if you want to sit on the side while you garden.
- Ideal Width – Less than 36 inches.
  - Too wide and you can't reach the middle to weed or plant.
  - Too narrow and big plants like tomatoes will grow over the edges excessively.
  - The ideal seems to be between 26 and 32 inches wide.
- If you have multiple raised beds, keep the aisles 3 feet wide to allow you to bring a wheelbarrow or other cart through the garden.

### How to construct a raised garden bed

- Still need good access to water, and full sun exposure all day.
- Still work – I still sweat in my garden – but it is significantly easier!
- Wood (not pressure treated!!!) or concrete blocks. Wood will last 5 to 8 years before it rots. The hollow spaces of concrete blocks can be hard to weed – cap with a flat stone or paver.
- What kind of soil? Sterile potting soil contains no weeds, which is awesome! But also has no nutrients.

### Here's the process:

1. Kill the grass – can use Round Up or lay down thick tarp for 5 to 6 weeks. Best results come in November, then pull the tarp up in late February or early March.
2. Put down landscape fabric over the entire garden area.
3. Cut out the sections where the raised beds will be.
4. Build the raised bed over top of the cut-out areas.

5. Loosen the native soil.
6. Add fresh, sterile, weed-free soil on top to fill up the bed to the top.
7. Plant, water, and maintain.

#### Other Considerations

- Probably not suited to watermelon, canteloupe, vining squash, sweet potatoes, or corn. They are big plants.
- Try bush varieties of some vegetables.
- Need a strong trellis or cage for climbing beans, tomato, and other vining crops.
- Some crops that struggle in heavy clay soils do amazing in raised beds, such as carrots!
- Try growing aggressive plants like Mint in a container – you don't have to worry it will crowd out your other plants!