

Simple Raised Garden Bed on a Budget

Hi, I'm Colin Massey, your horticulture agent at the Washington County Extension Office. With the COVID19 pandemic, there's a lot more interest in growing one's own food, and the purpose of this video is to demonstrate a very basic, raised-bed garden.

Now, raised beds can be a great way to maximize your space, or if you have poor soil conditions such as poor drainage, heavily sloped areas, or rocky areas. They are also a great way to maximize your space in that you can rotate your crops annually to reduce the instance of disease, and it can also make gardening more accessible if bending or reaching is an issue.

Now again this is going to be a pretty bare-bones project. This is not going to be the Cadillac of raised bed gardens. There are a number of places that offer kits or even ready-made beds, but the goal of this demo was to have the cost be under \$100, to utilize all of our wood, and have less than ten cuts.

Now we want to use cedar lumber. It's naturally rot-resistant. In this case, I had some leftover wood from another project, so I just bought a few extra pieces to match that. If at all possible, these are 1" boards, if you can we'd highly recommend using 2" thick boards. It's going to give you better structural integrity and more longevity as it's exposed to the elements. Soil, especially when wet, can be quite heavy, and some of these boards are going to have a tendency to want to bow out or warp.

So, I'm going to have to do some bracing on the middle of this with the particular plan that I've drawn. One way to get around that would be to actually make it shorter. Maybe to make some that are square, maybe 4 by 3 or 4 by 4. You're going to have less total pressure on the sides of that wood. Generally, we don't want to use pressure-treated lumber, there may be some chemicals in there that could leach into the soil.

Now, there are a couple of tools you're going to need to get the job done. And first and foremost would be to draw out a plan. In my case, for this dimension, I wanted to minimize the amount of cuts I had to make and to use all of the lumber.

So, I've drawn out those dimensions to know that I can achieve that. You'll need some fastening hardware if you don't already have it. A handsaw or circular saw. A screwdriver, cordless screwdriver, and drill. Safety glasses, and a tape measure. Now one other tool I use all the time is called a speed square. It's really great for marking lines and it has a nice lip on it where you can place that and get perfect 90- and 45-degree cuts. It also has markings for very common boards, and you can find this relatively inexpensively.

So, in addition to placement with regard to sunlight, you're also going to have to consider site preparation. What you don't want are weeds and grasses growing up through your raised bed. So, some folks will solarize an area for a couple of months to try to kill those weed seeds. You could lay down cardboard. In my case, I'm re-

purposing my neighbor's yard waste bags. Again, this is temporary for me, but this is going to get me through one growing season.

The dimension of this bed: these boards are 8 feet long. So, it's going to be 8 feet in length and stacked 12-inches high. I also have a 12-foot board that I'm going to make cuts on to comprise my 3-foot width. These are going to be secured in the corner with a ripped 2x4. You could also use brackets, and I'm also going to have to brace this in the middle to stop that from bowing once that soil gets moist and heavy. So now we've got our basic structure laid out. We've made all of our cuts. I only had to make nine cuts on these boards. This is kind of what it would look like upside down. It's not yet stacked. I'm probably going to dig these into the soil just a few inches for a little bit of structural integrity. Another thing I forgot to mention is when you're using the saw, make sure you've got some dust protection and some ear protection as well as eye protection. So now we have our finished raised garden bed. All I need to do is place my brace down here at the bottom.

We're going to place the bottom of the bed flush with the soil and bury our supports just a few inches for more rigidity. Then we need to prep our site, whether that be cardboard or the yard waste bags I mentioned before. And then all we must do is fill it with high-quality soil. So here we have our finished raised-garden bed. At the end of the day, this took me about an afternoon to construct and another hour or two to place and fill with my soil mix. I was able to get away with the materials for under \$100 and only nine cuts on the boards, another \$20 or \$30 for the soil mix. And this is going to last me many years because it's made of cedar. Now the only thing left to do is plant and repair my rake.

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