



## Raised Bed Ideas

### Why have a Raised bed?

Raised beds allow you to avoid problems of existing soils. They can also be easier for people to manage if they have limited mobility.

### What should I use for my raised beds?

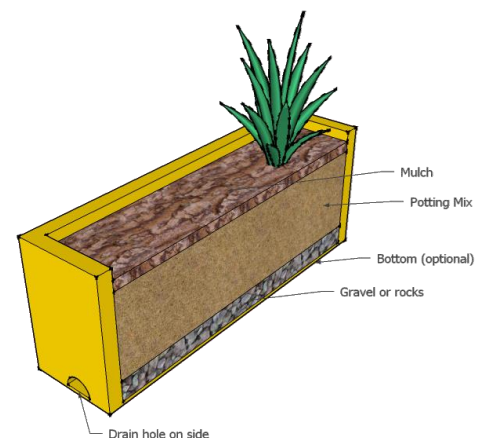
Anything will work that's 1) sturdy enough to hold the soil and 2) not toxic.

### How should I build my beds?

1. 12" or more in depth. More than 18" is probably a waste of material
2. Fill with good soil, rich in organic matter (at least 1/3 organic matter)
3. Beds or containers (if used) must drain excess water out the bottom (holes on side are great)
4. No wider than 48" but as long as you want
5. Considerations for different soils:
  - a. **For really bad soil** (e.g., very heavy clay or a salty, caliche soil in the desert) keep that soil and your raised bed separate. However, it's still a good idea to break up the underlying soil to improve drainage.
  - b. **For mediocre soil**, you can blend it gradually with your raised bed to increase the root zone.
  - c. **For salty soil**, the salt will wick up as a bed dries. If soil is very sodic (Na) then you probably want a barrier between your bed and the soil (e.g., bottom of a container, plastic).

### Potential Building Materials

- Tires
- Cement Blocks
- Earth bags / Sand Bags
- Straw Bale Gardening
- Lumber / Wood / Logs
  - Avoid creosote and petroleum preserved woods
- Plastic construction fencing (that orange barrier fence)
- Corrugated metal
- Horse trough
- Rocks
- Concrete



### Plan "B"

In some places where surface soil is really bad (e.g., caliche), gardeners dig out the problem soil and replace it with good soil. This is a sunken bed. It can be relatively cheap but requires a lot of work.

### Water

Water needs to be applied in enough volume to keep the salts leached out of the growing zone. If your water itself is salty this is very important to avoid buildup of salts. For those with clean water, you will be fine unless your bed's soil is in contact with native salty soil. In this case, the salts will wick into your bed (if you don't have a barrier). Deep irrigation can mitigate the problem. **This is complicated issue. Contact us if you see salt damage for help.**