

Building Raised Garden Bed from Palettes

With Gabor Sass



Pros and Cons of Raised Bed Gardening

Pros	Cons
Brings order to garden (can be aesthetically very pleasing)	Soil dries out quicker than in-ground beds
Easier to maintain (weeding, watering, picking)	Wood rots, concrete/rock breaks up (need to rebuild periodically)
More ergonomic (easier on back and knees)	Takes time, resources, money to build
More efficient use of resources (ie. water, fertilizer, and mulch don't get washed away)	Might need a lot of extra soil
Can be put anywhere (over impermeable [driveway], contaminated soil)	Can become an eye-sore if not maintained
Easier to build structures on to it (structures to grow vertical, mini hoop-house, etc)	Limited shapes; harder to modify than in-ground beds
Less compaction of soil (nobody will ever walk on it, except for the squirrels ;0)	Need tools, skills to assemble raised bed
Great way to use up left-over organic matter (branches, weeds, and un-finished compost), building materials and soil	

Further ideas:

<https://www.greenandvibrant.com/raised-garden-bed-plans>

Steps to make a raised bed garden from palettes

1. Source materials
 - Palettes: free from Copps Build-all, many commercial/industrial enterprises throw them out [pick-up heat-treated only and ask first!];

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- check with palette manufacturers and recyclers
 - Wooden stakes: could be made from left-over lumber or bought at lumber yard for <\$2 per piece
 - Screws or nails: left-over or purchased
 - Staples (purchased)
 - Tarps: left-over or purchased
 - Soil/compost/manure: farms from around London (\$15 to \$40 per yard plus delivery)
2. Cut palettes in half (~25 inches) or to desirable height (watch for nails!)
 3. If palettes are gappy, fill in with plywood or other type of appropriate lumber
 4. Prepare ground, if available spread gravel or chips and dust under palettes to minimize soil on wood contact
 5. Start at a corner, by driving stake into ground, screw palette to stake
 6. Add two stakes per palette; screw palettes together; watch for level
 7. Once bed frame is finished, staple plastic tarp to inside, leave some plastic overhang at the bottom
 8. If building multiple beds, space (20 inch minimum!) between beds can be covered with landscape fabric and then with gravel (or woodchips, etc)
 9. Fill beds like a hügelkultur:
 - i Big branches, woody debris at bottom;
 - ii Lower quality soil onto woody debris;
 - iii Add layer of unfinished compost;
 - iv Add more soil;
 - v Add aged manure;
 - vi Add best quality compost and best soil on top;
 - vii If soil is very sandy, mix in peat-moss or better yet, biochar to help in retaining moisture and nutrients better.
 10. Everything will settle and beds will need to be topped up following year
 11. Add raised bed cap for sharp look and ability to sit or walk on raised beds.
 12. For large raised beds, cross-bracing is very important, otherwise, ice will push out walls.
 13. To prolong life, cover bed with plastic for winter



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