

How to Build a Raised Garden Bed

Introduction:

This document instructs the reader on how to build a raised garden bed. This set of instructions shows the example of a 3' x 3' x 16.5'' garden bed, but extensions for different types of plants can be easily added. It provides a set of instructions including recommended materials, how to choose a location, steps for building the garden bed, and diagrams. This manual also includes an optional section for building a central compost area in the raised garden bed. It does not, however, include alternative methods of completing this project or the use of a kit.

The intended audience of this document is wide-ranging. It will be mostly geared towards people who intend to build a raised garden bed by themselves, without the use of a kit, in a period of a few hours. The audience is also expected to have a rudimentary knowledge of tools and the capability to acquire the necessary materials for this project.



An image of a raised garden bed using
Oldcastle 7.5 in. x 7.5 in. x 5.5 in. Tan Brown
Planter Wall Block

Source:

<https://www.homedepot.com/p/Oldcastle-7-5-in-x-7-5-in-x-5-5-in-Tan-Brown-Planter-Wall-Block-16202336/206501693>

Materials:

- Tools:

- Mallet
- Garden Trowel
- Shovel
- Leveling Tool
- Yardstick
- 4 toothpicks
- Materials:
 - 4 rebars (12 in. each)
 - Oldcastle 7.5 in. x 7.5 in. x 5.5 in. Tan Brown Planter Wall Block (12)
 - 2 bags garden soil
 - 2 bags potting soil
 - Wide-mesh hardware cloth (3'x 3')
- Optional (for central compost area):
 - 1'x3' lattice panels (4)
 - 8d nails (4)
 - Nail gun



Oldcastle 7.5 in. x 7.5 in. x 5.5 in. Tan Brown Planter Wall Block

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Cutting the Wood Pieces:

Before even choosing the location of your raised garden bed, it is important to cut the wood pieces that make up the walls of the structure.

1. Obtain 12 2"x3' untreated lumber or cedar planks from the nearest hardware store.

- a. If the planks need to be cut to size, they can be cut at the hardware store for about \$1/cut

Picking a Location and Leveling the Ground:

1. Pick a spot that is sunny, open, and big enough for the required size (3'x3'x16.5'').
2. Using the yardstick, map out a rough square shape in the chosen area. Mark each corner with a toothpick.
3. Using a garden shovel, make an inch-deep indentation at each toothpick marker, each about 6''x6''.
4. Place a block in each indentation.
5. To determine if the blocks are level:
 - Place the yardstick on top of two blocks.
 - Put the leveling tool on top of the yardstick and make adjustments to each indentation using the garden trowel. Do this for each of the four edges.

Setting Up the Frame:

1. Using a shovel, clear the 3'x3' area where the frame will be placed. Dig at least ½ inch below the layer of grass.
2. Take the wide-mesh hardware cloth and place it over this area. Hold down each of the corners with a stone block. This mesh keeps weeds out while letting earthworms in.
3. Slide in a wooden plank between each pair of stone blocks.
4. After finishing the first layer, place another set of blocks on top of the existing layer and put the wooden planks between each pair of blocks. Repeat for a third layer.
5. To keep the structure together:
 - Adjust the structure so that the center holes of each column of blocks is aligned.
 - Using a mallet, tap a rebar into this opening until it reaches the ground.

- Repeat for the other three columns of blocks.



A top view of the block shows where the rebar needs to be placed.

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6. *Optional:* Add a compost area in the middle of the frame. This structure is ideal if you maintain an ample supply of compost or are looking for an efficient way to start composting.

- In the center of the area for the frame, make a square 1'x1' indentation into the soil. Use a ruler to do so.
- Nail the 4 lattice boards together using an 8d nail at each of the top corners using the nail gun.
- Place the lattice frame into the earlier made indentation. This will be where compost will be placed.



An image of the compost area, made of lattice boards, in the middle of the raised garden bed.

Source:

<https://www.vitagardens.com/keyhole-garden/>

Adding Soil and Plants

1. Place a bottom layer mix of compost, grass clippings.

2. Ideally, start with a 50-50 ratio for garden soil and potting soil. Fill the frame about halfway with a layer of garden soil, and then put a layer of potting soil. Be sure to leave at least 2 inches at the top empty.
3. Set plants in holes and be sure to space different plants apart. Pat down the soil lightly around plants to allow water to pass down to the roots of each plant.
4. *Optional:* If the compost area was created:
 - a. Place compostable waste into this area. After all organic waste has decomposed, dump the byproduct into the existing soil and interleave it. Then, place more compost into the area.



An image of compost in the central compost area

Source:

<https://www.vitagardens.com/product/4x4-keyhole-garden/>