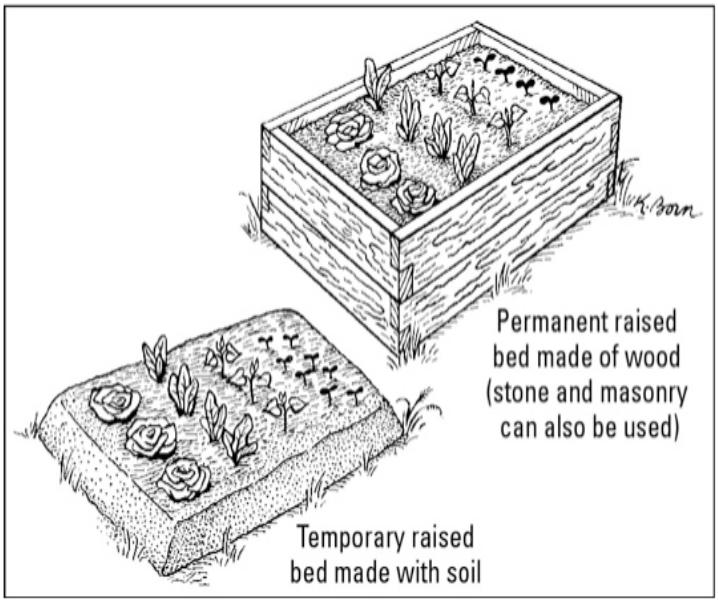
Green Village Initiative Raised Bed Guide!



Why Grow in Raised Beds & Containers?

- Control Your Soil Type & Conditions
- Soil warms up faster in the cooler months so you can grow crops for longer!
- Easy to attach trellising for tall growers, or fences for plant protection
- You can maximize every inch with square foot gardening!
- Make space for food Anywhere in the City!
- Be part of the food-growing Revolution!
- Have a little bit more control over keeping pests out of your garden

1 - Adapted from The Food Project's Do-It-Yourself Raised Bed Building Manual, 2012

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CHECK LIST BEFORE BUILDING YOUR RAISED BED:

- ✓ Find a **location** for your bed with good **sunlight & space**
- ✓ Record **measurements** for the frame
- ✓ Choose the **type of frame** you want to make
- ✓ Get the main **materials** you will need for the frame

Questions to Ask Before You Begin:

1. What are you most passionate about growing (and eating!)? What are that plant's needs?
2. Does the area you want to build in get at least 8 hours of sunlight?
3. Is the area you want to build in level? If not, how can you make it level?
4. How will you get water to this bed all season long?
5. Can you start small and build more beds after you get the hang of a season of growing?

Choose Your Frame

At GVI we recommend building 4 foot by 8 foot beds for easy access to the middle!
We buy 3 pieces of 2 inch thick X 10 inch wide x 8 foot long wood. When you cut one of these pieces in half you will have your shorter ends!

WOOD	• Untreated pine is affordable and lasts between 5 and 8 years. • Treated wood no longer has arsenic used in its production and is called "ground-safe" and can be used for raised bed building • Spruce is a nicer type of pine that will cost a bit more. • Redwood / cedar have natural rot and insect resistant properties, but is much more expensive. • Composite wood is a product made from recycled plastic and wood fibers—like sawdust from woodworking shops and used plastic grocer bags—and it comes in a variety of looks. This material is expensive because it is extremely long-lasting and water-resistant. *If you Call your local Lumber supply or Home Depot, your prices may vary!
TIP: Never use pressure-treated wood because the chemicals can potentially seep into your garden.	
BRICKS & STONES	• You can sometimes find these materials for cheap or free! Make sure they are unpainted and wash them off before using!
STRAW BALES	• Recommended types are wheat, oats, rye or barley to avoid weed seeds! Straw Bales can be purchased at local farms in CT for $7-9 per bale

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Build That Bed!

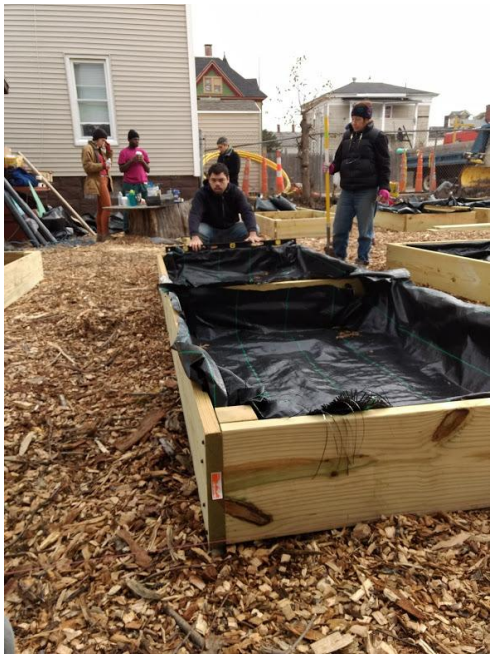
TIP: If building raised beds longer than 8 feet, it's best to install cross braces or cross supports to keep the frame from bulging outward over time.

YOUR EARTH	 Avoid bare soil around the base of your bed. At GVI we used to use woodchips, and now to prevent weeds we instead plant clover or low-growing herbs around our beds to avoid mowing! Some folks like to use stone chips or grass!
BED HEIGHT	Decide on desired height of frame. At GVI we generally builds raised beds that are 10" in height, but the options are endless! A height of 3 feet reduces bending over, while 6" is high enough for most crops, though you will need to add lots of compost!

TOOLS YOU'LL NEED	• 3 pieces of 2"x10"x8' wood, 1 piece cut in half into 2"x10"x4' pieces (details above)
	• Something to attach corners: At GVI use scrap 4"x 4" wood
	• 3-inch or longer screws (details below); 4" timberloks last longest
	• Scissors
	• Drill
	• 4 foot wide Landscape Fabric
	  ○ Consider quality: There are varying qualities of landscape fabric. Heavy-duty ones are best to use but harder to source in small quantities.
	  ○ Other options: Thick layers of cardboard (boxes) can also act as a barrier between new and old soil
	• Staple gun & staples

BUILDING PLANS	--Two people recommended-- 1. Start with one corner. Place one 4"x4" on one of the ends of a 4' long piece of wood, making sure bracket is flush with the edge of the wood. Drill three screws into the wood at the top, middle and bottom so the bracket attaches to the wood. 2. Repeat step 1 with the 2nd piece of 4' wood and remaining 4"x4".

	3. Sit up one of the 8’ pieces of wood. Person 1 holds 4’ piece flush with the end of the 8’ piece, creating an L-shape. Repeat step 1 to attach the 8 foot piece of wood to the other side of your 4”x4”. You should have an “L” created with your 4”x4” securing the elbow. 4. Repeat step 3 with remaining 8’ and 4’ pieces of wood. 5. You should now have 2 separate L-shapes. Line up the two L’s so they create a rectangle. Drill screws into remaining holes of brackets so all sides are together. 6. Place the completed frame in the leveled area you wish to have your raised bed. 7. Place the landscape fabric within the frame to create a barrier between existing ground. Ensure that landscape fabric is as flush as possible. It is not necessary to attach the fabric to the frame. We like to just to make sure it does not move when we fill the bed with soil! 8. Now your frame is ready to be filled with healthy soil!



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What Is Good Soil for My Raised Bed?

CHOOSE YOUR SOIL	One of the most important steps to creating a productive garden is choosing the right soil. Raised beds provide a unique advantage because the gardener can fully control what type of soil the garden will have! Soil is a key determinant in how much food a garden can grow, so it's worth doing your research and spending a little more upfront, if possible. The better the soil, the more you will be able to maximize space and use every inch of your raised bed!  
START MIXES	Consider a starter mix that can be improved over time. At GVI we use a compost–loam mix. Often a 50%-50% mix is suggested for a garden. If available, consider mixes with higher ratios of **compost**, such as 75% compost- 25% loam. Also try asking companies for a sample. Often what your own observations tell you is valid! Don't stress too much, though - Regardless of the ratio that you choose, you can build your soil health over time!
PEAT MOSS	Building up soil: Peat moss is a nice addition to raised bed soil. If it is not added into the mix in year one, peat moss can always be added later. Peat will lighten the weight of soil providing more air for healthy root growth, and helps soil retain water.
COMPOST	Type of compost: compost can come from many sources – leaves, food scraps,grass clippings, wood, to name a few. It is often difficult or impossible to know the source(s) of a particular compost batch. One useful approach is to source different types of compost for your garden. Varying compost sources within the soil of your raised bed improves overall quality .Always aim to add compost once a year, preferably at the end of a growing season. Doing so maintains soil health and depth.

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SOIL CHECK LIST:

- ✓ **Calculate** how many cubic yards of soil your bed needs
- ✓ **Choose** the type of **soil mix** you want for your bed
- ✓ **Find** the most **affordable and accessible soil** vendor for your needs
- ✓ **Coordinate** how to get the soil to your raised bed: delivery, rental truck, or using a personal vehicle

How Much Soil Do I Need?

SOIL CALC!	No need to stress about the math! We use online tools to calculate our soil needs, like : http://www.gardeners.com/Soil-Calculator/7558,default,pg.html
SOIL MATH BASICS	• For a 4x8–foot raised bed with a 10" height, about 1 cubic yard of soil is needed. • For a 4x8-foot raised bed with a 6" height, use about 5 cubic feet each of compost, peat moss, and vermiculite is needed. • 30 gallons (about the size of standard trash bin) = 4-5 cubic feet of compost • 3.9 cubic feet compressed bale of peat moss = 8 cubic feet loose • 1 cubic yard = 27 cubic feet
HOW CAN I GET IT TO MY NEW GARDEN?	If delivery costs are too high, consider renting a truck for picking up the soil. Maybe a friend has a truck you can use. Avoiding deliveries can help cut soil costs. Home Depot rental truck = www.homedepotrents.com/truckrental.asp • $19 for the first 75 minutes, $5 for every 15 minutes after • $69 for a day's use • Plus cost of gas Zipcar = www.zipcar.com • Hourly rates: $8-$15 (Note: Membership required) A Personal Car • Consider a DIY option of shoveling compost into trash barrels, we use big plastic totes! • While transporting soil is a lot of work, especially in a car, consider spending money saved on delivery to purchase supplies
WHERE SHOULD I BUY?	Common Sources for your Local Urban Farms: • Gilberties Organics (GVI's go-to source for 10 years!) 65 Adams Road Easton, CT 06612 203-452-0913 • Harvest New England-

	232 Colt Highway Farmington, CT 06032 (860) 674-8855 x101 • Peels 'N Wheels Compost dmedina@pwcomposting.com 15 James St, New Haven, CT 06513 203-444-8955 • Snow's 550 Sport Hill Road Easton, CT 06612 203-261-2020

Learn More

- Green Village Initiative has FREE workshops, volunteer hours, and farmer resources every Saturday from April - October at our farm at 1469 Reservoir Avenue, Bridgeport!
    - Our workshops are always hands-on, often co-lead by staff and youth, and cover a range of topics from gardening to preparing and cooking food.
- Send Us Your Feedback and Stories!
    - Was this DIY manual helpful? We'd love to hear your feedback, view photos of your building experience, and hear your garden stories. Please stay in touch!
    - **Send your comments to communitygardens@GoGVI.org**