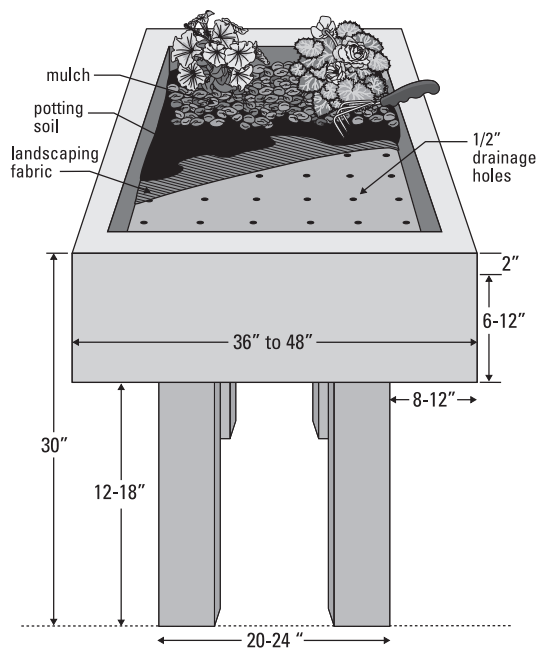


Special considerations for tabletop gardens

- Sizes can be adjusted to accommodate the reach of an individual gardener or a group of gardeners, as well as the space available.
- Recommended width is 36 to 48 inches.
- Suggested height is 30 to 33 inches to top of bed.
- Most plants need at least 6 to 12 inches of soil for good rooting and growth.
- Planting bed depth should allow for 1 to 2 inches of mulch on top of soil.
- Drilling 1/2-inch holes every 6 inches across the base promotes good drainage.
- Lining the planting bed bottom with a landscaping fabric before adding the soil mix allows only the water to drain through the holes.
- Secure the footings into the ground with cement for best stabilization.



These dimensions are typical for a tabletop raised bed planter.

For more information

Check these additional publications in the Therapeutic Gardening Series:

- *A Factor in Choosing Healthcare Facilities*, RG 108
- *Benefits for Healthcare Facilities*, RG 109
- *Container Vegetable Gardening*, PM 870B
- *Gardening Tips for Older Adults*, RG 107
- *Resources*, RG 110

Check these Web sites:

ISU Extension Distribution Center—

www.extension.iastate.edu/store

ISU Horticulture—

www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu

Reiman Gardens—

www.reimangardens.iastate.edu

The Iowa Horticulturist—

www.iowahort.org

Iowa Master Gardeners—

www.mastergardener.iastate.edu

If you want to learn more about horticulture through training and volunteer work, ask your ISU Extension office for information about the ISU Extension Master Gardener program.

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... and justice for all

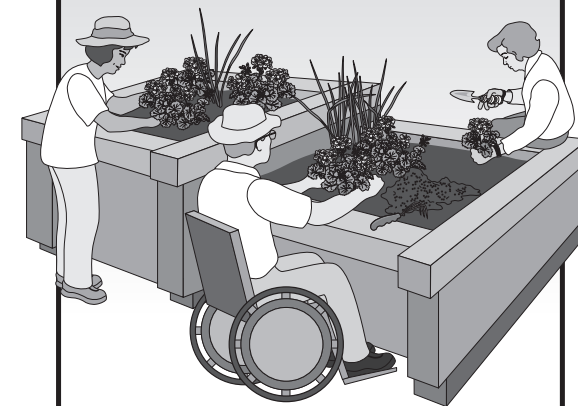
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RG 111 August 2006

**REIMAN
GARDENS**
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Therapeutic
Gardening**

Creating Raised Bed Planters



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

Raised beds and planters make gardening accessible for gardeners of all abilities. Raised beds allow much of the activity to be done from a seated position on the ground, a permanent built-in ledge, or from portable chairs, wheelchairs, benches, or scooters. Tabletop gardens also help the visually impaired by bringing the garden closer to eye level.

🌱 Considerations

Many types of raised bed planters are possible. The type you choose should be based on the abilities and interest of the gardener(s) who will be using them, and on the opportunities provided by your site.

Use the following guidelines to start the planning process.

Site

- Raised bed planters are usually placed in sunny locations because most vegetables and flowers require at least six hours of full sun for peak performance.
- Choose a level site to simplify the building process.
- A north-south orientation for the planter is best for low-growing crops.

Water

- A water supply with a lightweight hose should be easily accessible.
- Automatic or trickle irrigation systems may be worth the investment for permanent planters.

Size

- Raised beds for a wheelchair user should be about 2 to 3 feet high.
- Forward reach from a wheelchair, without bending, is about 30 inches.
- Beds with access on just one side should be no wider than 2 to 3 feet.
- Beds with pathways all around can be 4 to 5 feet wide depending on the gardener's reach and upper arm strength.

Pathways

- Level paths increase maneuverability and safety.
- Allow sufficient width between beds to accommodate gardeners' mobility.
- Paved access to the garden area often increases site usage.

Materials

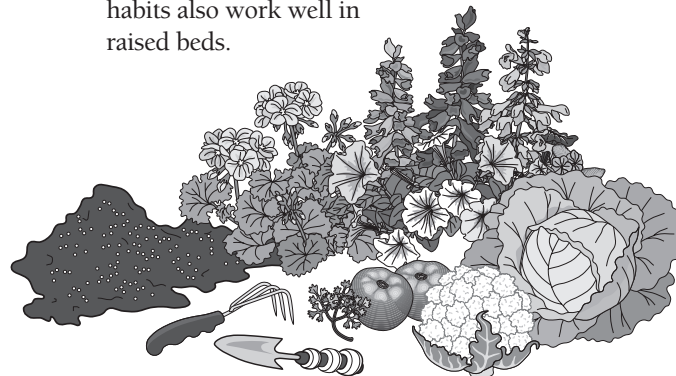
- Effective raised beds can be made using 1 x 10-inch or 2 x 12-inch pressure treated lumber to build simple square or rectangular boxes over soil.
- Cinder blocks, landscape edging blocks, stone, bricks, and poured concrete are other choices.

Soil

- Use a mixture of equal parts of sphagnum peat moss, garden loam, and sharp sand.
- Test the soil mixture for nutrients and pH. Add lime or sulfur as needed to bring the pH to about 6.0 to 6.5.
- Incorporate a slow-release fertilizer if indicated by the soil test.
- When filling the planter bed, remember to allow space for 1 to 2 inches of mulch on top of the soil.

Plants

- Annual flowers and vegetables are best for tabletop gardens and raised beds.
- Vegetable cultivars with compact growth habits also work well in raised beds.



🌱 Possible vegetable cultivars for raised bed gardens

Beets	Ruby Queen, Detroit Dark Red
Carrots	Little Finger, Danvers Half Long, Nantes Half Long
Cucumber	Salad Bush, Bush Champion, Spacemaster
Eggplant	Dusky
Green beans	Topcrop, Tendercrop, Derby
Lettuce	Green Ice, Salad Bowl, Red Sails, Black Seeded Simpson, Buttercrunch, Oakleaf
Parsley	Dark Moss Curled, Paramount
Pepper	Lady Bell, Gypsy, Crispy, New Ace, Bell Boy, Red Chili (hot)
Radishes	Champion, Comet, Sparkler, White Icicle, Early Scarlet Globe
Spinach	American Viking, Long Standing Bloomsdale, Melody
Summer squash	Pic-N-Pic (yellow crookneck)
Swiss chard	Fordhook Giant (white ribbed), Lucullus (green ribbed), Bright Lights
Tomatoes	
Standard	Jetstar, Celebrity, Super Bush
Patio	Patio
Cherry	Pixie

