



Raised Bed Gardens

When poor soil conditions exist and space is limited, the Raised Bed Garden can be just the ticket !

- Herbs
- Vegetables
- Dwarf Fruits
- Flowering Plants



About The Author



Through my many years, I have perfected my gardening skills and expanded my knowledge and experience as a gardening instructor, speaker, author, certified nursery consultant, and most recently blogger.

I was introduced to gardening at the very early age of 8. I lived across the street from a man who gardened his little slice of heaven on about 5 acres of semi-rural property in No. California. Mr. May had everything from honeybees to an orchard, and was very accommodating to the little boy from across the street. I spent hours shadowing Mr. May around his place, asking questions, making mental notes and scurrying across the street to try my hand in my parent's anemic yard. Eventually I got so good at applying Mr. May's know-how that I won the consent of my Mother to tend her flower beds; and my Dad gave me a vegetable garden plot in the corner of our backyard. I didn't know then that I was attracted to the science of the whole thing, but I could see the results and was very proud of the increase in blooms for my Mom, and the vegetable production that even I could appreciate as abundant. I was hooked.

High school and college left little time or opportunity to get in the dirt. But, I was rewarded and further encouraged by my zoology and botany classes and next tried my hand at tending a garden underneath the high porch and stairs of our apartment in No. New Jersey. It all came back to me and when we finally had our first home I had my first garden plot as an adult. Some early setbacks and a hankering to be more at-one with the earth, led me to the disciplines and sacrifices of French Bio-Intensive Organic Gardening. Yeah, I wore wing tips to work, but I had Berkenstocks in my heart as a young man in the late 70s.

Today, I live on a "rock" in Rocklin, CA and my active gardening is restricted to raised beds (even my lawn is a raised bed) and patio containers. But, I do keep up with the latest trends in gardening, the irreversible encroachment of the Government on our garden culture; and most importantly, those new to the pleasures of gardening. As a nursery consultant in the Garden Center of the world's leading home improvement store chain, I have even gained a faithful following of young adults with first home responsibilities and opportunities: and retired men and women who now have the time, focus, and inclination to finally develop a better understanding of gardening and hopes for its rewards.





Raised Bed Gardens

Raised Bed Gardening Simple ✿ Affordable ✿ Fun

In South Placer County we do not enjoy soft, workable soil suitable for vegetable gardens and flower beds. A great deal of energy and strength are required to dig deeply into our native soil and prepare it for cultivation. Even with this effort, most of us will find only hard, rocky soil begging for amendments of composted materials.



The alternative is simply to do our leisurely vegetable and flower gardening above ground in RAISED BEDS. Raised Bed Gardens can be as simple as filling an oak half barrel, redwood planks, or the latest style . . . “blocks and boards”, all filled with fresh bags of premium, well composted " soil ".

What's especially great about any raised bed is . . . you control EVERYTHING ! Where you place it, how you construct it, even what you place inside it are all determined by . . . YOU !

With the right preparations, you'll have a "garden" that will serve your growing needs for years to come.



Raised Beds

The Long Bed has been the mainstay of raised bed gardening as promoted by the editors of Sunset Magazine®.

Its sturdy **rough redwood planks** (2" X 12") **OR** **con common redwood boards** (2" x 6") make the perfect perimeter for the square or rectangle shaped bed.

Its simple construction from readily available materials meets the special requirements of many raised bed gardens. This design will easily accommodate a bottom fitted **pest screen** of 1/4 in. **hardware cloth**.

This design can utilize 4"x 4" posts to support the corners of the bed. If you fancy the addition of solar post lights be certain that you purchase redwood **Con-Common** 4" x 4" posts. Lights will **NOT** fit the rough redwood fence posts.

For the raised bed gardener wanting to create an early season cold protection, or protect maturing plants from flying insects, a simple **PVC hoop structure** will support a "cloche" of clear plastic; or a adjustable screen of cloth mesh to protect plants from flying insects. PVC mounts, fastened with pipe straps should be installed before soil is added and situated with a span between bows of not more than 4 ft. to prevent sagging.

The Long Bed



Raised Beds

A Garden Guy Favorite

After the oak half barrel, the **Plank 'n Post** raised bed in my favorite. It is extremely sturdy, quick and easy to put together. And because it is redwood, will last for decades even touching the ground. Many of my followers like this basic design because they can add their favorite solar powered post lights for their nocturnal visits to the garden.



Just Two Pieces Of Lumber

The 2 ft x 4 ft bed (pictured above) can be made by cutting (with help from our friends in the Home Depot Lumber Dept) :

ONE 2 in x 12 ft rough redwood plank

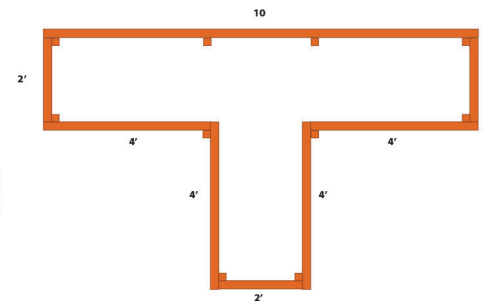
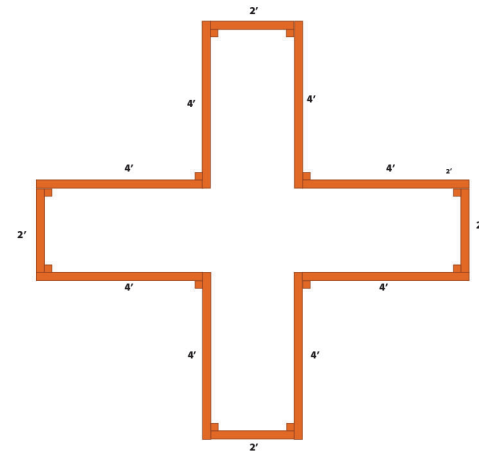
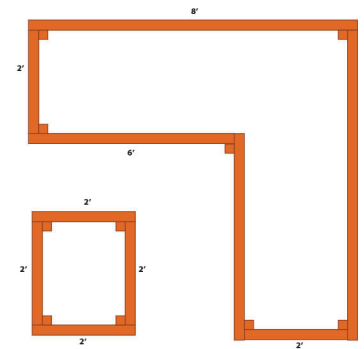
ONE 4 in x 4 in x 8 ft redwood post*
cut to four 18 in. posts

These other layouts can be made economically with a combination of 8 ft and 12 ft long planks.

The Plank 'n Post has several unique advantages

- Quick assemble - just 16 deck screws
- Room to add a second plank for deeper soil
- Short version accommodates solar post lights
- Can be built to any right angle bed design
- Easy to adopt for shade / insect covers

For a comfortable visit to your raised beds, fashion one or more seat caps to the top of your Plank n Post set up.



* If you fancy the addition of solar post lights be certain that you purchase redwood **Con-Common 4" x 4"** posts. Lights will **NOT** fit the rough redwood posts.

Raised Bed

Oak Half Barrel

The vaunted Oak Half Barrel has long been the planter of choice for patio trees, dwarf fruit, and tomatoes. In fact, this is the basis of the popular “ Skip’s Tomato Machine “ as outlined later in this publication. This re-purposing of a used wine or whiskey barrel can be both convenient and economical.

Pick a barrel with staves that are still firm and tightly connected. When you get it home (and before you drill the holes) fill it half full of water and let it sit overnight. This will re-saturate the staves and their jointed connection to the bottom.

The barrels sold at retail seldom have any hole in the bottom. You **MUST** drill four or five 3/4 inch holes in the bottom so the barrel will **DRAIN** effectively after each watering.

Oak barrels will last for years if they don’t make direct contact with the soil they sit on. Setting your barrel on three concrete blocks does two things. First, there is no contact with the soil it sits on. And second, it permits the flow of air under and into the barrel. Air flow is vital to preserving the bottom of the barrel; and adds greatly to the air needed by the root system of your plantings.

If height is a factor barrels can also be set on pedestal like structures to raise them one or two feet closer to your reach without bending over.



Raised Beds

BLOCK RING



TWO TIER CONCRETE BLOCK Raised Bed Planter

Easy ■ Solid ■ Affordable

Available in Grey, Tan/Charcoal, Red/Charcoal (used above).

A block planter is the ideal container for a quick and easy flowering color bed, herb garden, or tree ring.

No special tools needed. Just level a spot, set in place and plant.
Perfectly drained, tillable soil every time, year after year !

NOTE: In tree ring bed, always prevent soil or mulch from making contact with the base of the tree.

**Formed From 23 (11 over 12)
4" X 12" WALL BLOCKS**

For 7" soil depth, fill with
4 Bags of Patio Plus® .

Raised Bed

The Jointed Block raised bed is quickly becoming a favorite choice for assembling a raised garden bed. These specialty blocks from Oldcastle are available from Home Depot for around \$4 ea.

Each bed, or bed segment is bounded by four corners engineered to support the inserting of 2" dimensional lumber cut to the desired length. The block was designed to accommodate a single 2" x 6" redwood or fir board between a set of corners.

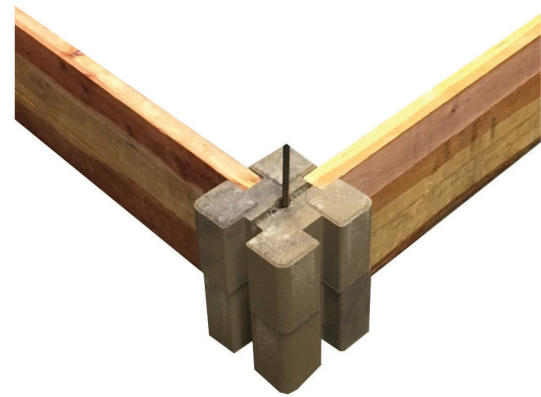
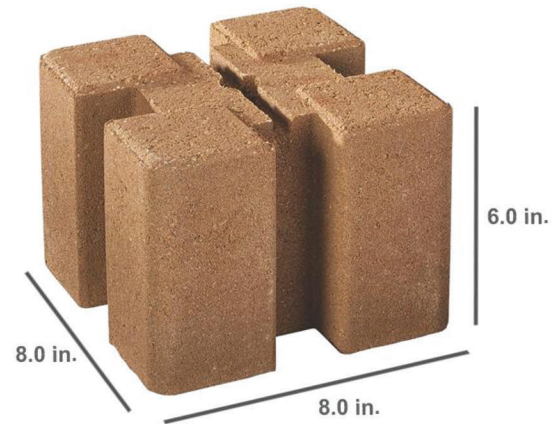
However, it has been found that when **TWO** blocks occupy each corner **THREE** rough redwood 2" x 4" fence boards (as depicted here on the right) form a top joint that is exactly level with the block top. This flush top makes it easy to add a 6" or 8" board to the top rail to add finish to the bed and present a comfortable spot to seat and tend your bed; or just contemplate your success !

A piece of 1/2" rebar should be driven down the center of each block set **BEFORE** the tops are finished.

Your Oldcastle Garden Bed layout is limited only by your imagination. They can be tall, short, set at right angles, and even terraced with a trellis back-side.

When designing your layout, and selecting its location(s) be certain to take full advantage of the sun when it shines down on your bed. Higher forms and features in the back and lower in the front facing the sun.

Jointed Block Corners



Raised Beds

Building The Microbial Village

SOIL POROSITY & AIR MOVEMENT

Moisture and nutrients, especially those created naturally by microorganisms in your soil, must have the air necessary to effectively transport both to the micro “hairs” on the roots. *It's extremely important you appreciate that: moisture and nutrients are taken on by the roots as a gas! This cannot be accomplished efficiently without good air circulation in the soil.* This is one of the major advantages of the raised bed you build. By starting with extra rich soil like Kellogg's **PATIO PLUS**, you will ensure from the beginning there will be a healthy coexistence between soil and roots for the flowers and vegetables you grow.

-  **Organic Material, Large**
-  **Sandy Particles**
-  **Organic Material, Small**
-  **Moisture**
-  **Microflora**
-  **Earthworms**

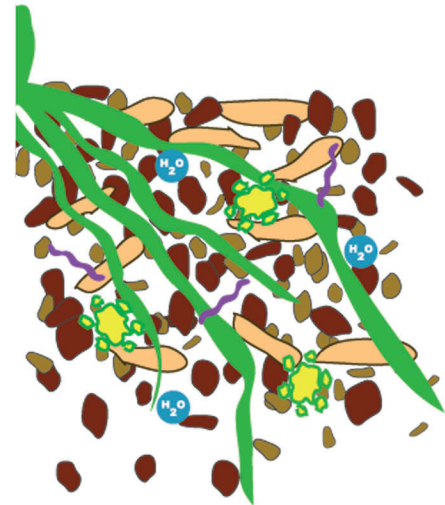
ASSIST FROM OUR LITTLE HELPERS

Soil with sufficient air and “tilth” is the perfect home for Earthworms and subterranean insects that consume organic matter and turn it into casts which are considered to be some of the richest nutrients in nature. These beneficial critters can naturally find their way into your raised beds attracted by the decaying plant materials they find there.

There is a downside to encouraging these little friends to take up residence in your raised beds . . . earthworms are to moles, what candy is to kids ! You may wish to consider adding a sheet of “hardware” cloth to the bottom of your raised bed to deter these little devils.



A daily watering of O+ as light “tea” made from 2 tbs of O+ / 1 gal water will help light up your Microbial Village.





Raised Bed Gardens



Skip's Tips For A GREENER THUMB

The planting of starter plants in prepared beds can result in "transplant shock". This condition can result in a set back in the young plants path to ultimate flowering and production. If, after you have done your all to establish the soil's micro village, it would be a shame to transplant a seedling destined to have a slow start in root development. Watering in new plantings with a solution of **SUPERthrive** will help to ensure the early establishment of feeder roots, providing a stronger system for supplying the nutrients and moisture vital to a robust plant eager to regularly flower; and bear fruit.

SUPERthrive

Prevents Plant Shock.

Promotes Root Development.

NOT A PLANT FOOD.

A concentrated formula of ALL the necessary
Plant Vitamins and Rooting Hormones

Water In After Planting Vegetables, Flowers, Shrubs, or Trees.

1 CAP Full to 2 Gal. Water

One 4 oz. Bottle

Makes Gallons and Gallons of Solution





Skip's Tips
For A
GREENER THUMB

Soils For Raised Beds

If bulk soils are not convenient you can use either of these
Bagged Raised Bed Soils

These organic choices are all the soil you will need to grow flowers and vegetables.

Don't be afraid to purchase extra bags. Any unopened bags are returnable to the origin of purchase.

Skip's Pick



PATIO PLUS®
(See Note Below)
1.5 cu ft Bag



RAISED BED ORGANIC SOIL
3.0 cu ft Bag



If BAGGED SOIL is not economical , the best BULK soil for planting any raised bed is commonly known as

PLANTERS MIX

Planters Mix is available in bulk from most garden material lots and can be picked up, or delivered locally for a modest fee.

Editor's Note: Kellogg's Patio Plus is a very rich mixture that includes several "earthy" smelling composted manures. This is NOT a choice for indoor planters, or where pets might like to snack on the soil.



Skip's TOMATO Machine !



How do you enjoy juicy, ripe tomatoes in an area plagued with poor soil. Many followers of The Garden Guy entrust their tomato crop to **“ Skip's Tomato Machine ”**.

The Tomato Machine is a sturdy combination of off the shelf products that combine to offer our customers an enormously efficient container in which they can successfully grow an abundance of the tomatoes of their choice . . . in a nearly perfect organic environment.

The Tomato Machine is a half oak barrel married to a piece of Remesh Wire (Bldg. Supply Center) fashioned into a sturdy "tower", kept off the ground by small concrete blocks (Garden Center) and filled with three bags of **Kellogg's Patio Plus®** for a soil depth that will support two mature tomato plants.

To get a jump on the growing season the tower is wrapped in a .7 mil **Clear Plastic Drop Cloth**. to create an early season hot house environment. To ensure exceptionally healthy and productive plants, 1 gal. starter tomato plants are "**deep planted**" and watered in with a solution of **Super Thrive®** ". Initially, plants are fed a light solution of **Fish Fertilizer** until fruit set. When green tomatoes start coming on, the gardener is ready to feed their new crop with the low nitrogen nutrition provided monthly by adding 2/3 cup of **Kellogg Organic Tomato/Vegetable Fertilizer®** per plant, per barrel, per month, until harvest is complete.

The only prep required is the drilling of five 3/8 in holes in the bottom.

Add these materials and products together and you'll have a valuable **GARDENING SOLUTION** . . . and a wealth of juicy ripe tomatoes for many seasons to come.



(TOP) Towers are wrapped to create Hot House.

(Bottom) Machines in full production July 4 th.

Project List

- 1 Half Oak Barrel
- 1 Sheet Remesh Wire
- 3 Garden Blocks
- 1 Plastic Drop Cloth
- 3 Bags Patio Plus Potting Soil
- 1 Bottle super THRIVE
- 1 Bottle Kellogg Fish/Kelp Fertilizer
- 1 Bag Kellogg Tomato/Veg Fertilizer





Skip's Tips For A GREENER THUMB

Align Plants For Maximum Sunlight

Position plants in relationship to their mature height. Position TALLER PLANTS in the back and shorter plants in the front facing the midday sun.

Deeper Soil Means More Roots

Make sure the soil in each bed is as deep as you can afford to make it. Have a plan to increase depth in the second year. Try to mix the richest soil components including composted materials. Skip's Plank 'n Post bed is ideal for a second year investment in 12 more inches of root space in the same foot print. With two feet of soil depth you could even grow corn !

Don't Make The Bed Too Wide

Keep any raised bed to a maximum of 4 feet wide. if accessible from two sides. This will give you up to 2 feet of reach without unduly adding compression to the soil by repeatedly leaning into the bed to tend your garden.

Don't Plant In Rows

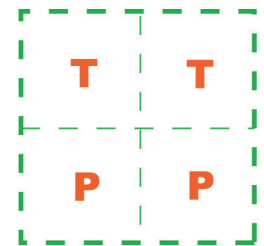
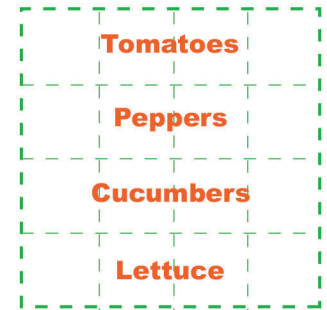
Planting in traditional rows wastes space in a raised bed. And, invites unnecessary weed growth and evaporation. Planting in squares will invited tomatoes, peppers and other shrub like vegetables to knit together and shade the soil, blocking out sunlight on the soil and conserving moisture through the day.

Growing Vertically Conserves Space

For extra yield in your raised beds, consider growing vertically. Pole beans, climbing cucumbers, and peas are good choices. Snow peas make an excellent cool season vertical crop. Bamboo and string makes a sturdy, inexpensive trellis that, stores easily for future use. **Caution:** Be certain to plant taller verticals on the side away from the sun so as not to deprive lower plants of their share of sunlight.

Tending Your Raised Bed Is A Year 'round Affair

If you don't plant a Winter Garden, be certain to cover your soil with 3 mil. thick black plastic sheeting (kept in place by a couple of 2x4s or staples. This will help your soil to "winter-over" resulting in less compaction from weather settled soil, and ensure your soil will be ready to plant early in late winter or early spring . . . and already weed free !



Wishing You Every Success

I hope you have found this
Quick Guide To Raised Bed Gardening
valuable and inspiring.

Gardening is just one of the interests enjoyed by my league of faithful followers who have shared many of my experiences through one of my personally authored publications:

- WEBSITE skipsoutdoorliving.com
- BLOG skipsoutdoorliving.com/blog
- RESOURCES skipsoutdoorliving.com/resources
- CONTACT skip@skipsoutdoorliving.com



Better Outdoor Living With Every Visit

is divided into these main areas of interest

**Yard and Garden
Outdoor Cooking
Patio Living**



Skip Batchelder

