

Benefits of Raised Bed Gardening

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I. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

- A. Easy way to get started with success
- B. Improved growing environment: soil structure and drainage
- C. Grow more in less space -improved conditions, spring soil warms more quickly earlier planting
- D. Easier to care for: more accessible-less bending, easier weeding, etc.
- E. Esthetics, they help keep things looking nice and tidy. Easy to add vertical growing supports

II. BUILDING & FILLING RAISED BEDS

A. Site selection

- i. Maximize sunlight, 6 hours min, 10+ hours is best for fruiting crops (tomatoes, squash, etc)
- ii. Access to water, consider slope, consider convenience to kitchen, etc.

B. Size

- i. Height: 6in min, we like 12in with a bench, taller is great for accessibility but costly
- ii. Width: 3-4ft wide to be able to reach the middle, any length

C. Dealing with grassy, weedy area

- i. We prefer sheet mulching when there are tough perennial weeds (e.g. field bindweed) – soak area, lay overlapping wet cardboard (4" overlap) over grass and build beds up from there
- ii. Other options include solarization with clear plastic, sod cutter, or synthetic herbicides

D. Framed versus unframed

- i. Wood, Trex, galvanized steel rings, cinderblock, or simply mound up soil & compost
- ii. Choosing wood: 2x lumber-Fir is great. Redwood or cedar last longer but are more expensive. Avoid pressure-treated lumber. Linseed oil can be added as an organic preservative.

E. Soil

- i. We prefer a 50/50 mix of native topsoil and quality compost. We also add whatever organic matter we have laying around to the bottom-see lasagna method:
- ii. Lasagna method: fill beds with layers of organic matter and some topsoil-brown leaves, grass clippings, straw, coffee grounds, vegetable scraps, etc., top with finished compost
- iii. Opinion on soilless mixes (e.g. Mel's mix: 1/3 compost, 1/3 peat moss, 1/3 vermiculite) -more disadvantages than advantages, as they do not retain water and nutrients as well.

F. Irrigation: drip irrigation is an excellent choice. We use Netafim with .9gph emitters @ 12" spacing.

III. PLANNING, PLANTING, MAINTENANCE

- A. Cool vs. warm season. Time planting carefully for different vegetables. Consider season extension.
- B. Spacing: spacing in raised beds can be closer than field. Experiment. Consider square foot gardening.
- C. Replenish beds once or twice a year with organic material and nutrient dense sources by simply laying on top: 1-2in compost, brown leaves, coffee grounds, worm castings, etc.

IV. ABOUT FOODSCAPING UTAH

Foodscaping Utah is 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that helps people get started growing their own food.

A. Hands-on Learning

- i. Volunteers help foodscape front yards. 'Scape' days: 2 hours foodscaping, ~30min class & food
- ii. Hands-on classes for things like drip irrigation

B. Education through YouTube, learning blog, and in-person classes