



# A10 Building a raised bed



This activity has detailed instructions for building a raised bed. The examples can be adapted for your preferred size, height, and shape (see B4.5). There is also information on buying raised beds, including wood from sustainable sources. This activity is a great opportunity to involve the community (see A2).

## Resources

- Construction materials for your raised bed (see buying information below)
- Tools including: hammer (suitable weight), tape measure, pencil, saw
- Copy of building instructions

## Activity before construction

- 1 Involve pupils as much as possible in planning the raised beds. This includes them in the project from the very start.
- 2 Design the raised bed area (perhaps with a school competition). Decide how big you want the beds, what shape and how many.
- 3 Work out the required materials and tools for your design and find suppliers.
- 4 Develop a construction plan with project supervisors.

## Activity at construction

- 1 If needed, remove turf and weeds from the site (see A14).
- 2 Organise materials and working space for ease of access and safety, eg put materials and tools where you need them and keep working teams a safe distance apart.
- 3 Minimise damage from foot traffic to areas of lawn and soil. Use wooden boards to spread your weight or tough plastic sheeting, especially when wet.
- 4 Follow your construction plan and building instructions, regularly reviewing progress and site safety.
- 5 Tidy the site regularly during construction and when finished.

## Extended activities

- 1 After the soil has settled, begin planting
- 2 Tell everyone what you've done!

### Health & Safety

Use tools safely according to manufacturers' instructions. Ensure adult supervision at all times. Wear gloves as required to protect skin from abrasion and splinters. Keep a safe distance between working teams. Handle materials carefully, especially long planks of wood, being aware of people nearby.

*See also Health and Safety Guidelines (Section B3.3)*

### Further information

A14 Clearing weeds and grass  
A26 Digging  
A16 Building a garden path  
B4.5 Growing in raised beds

## Buying information for raised beds

### Tips for buying wood

- Buy second hand or recycled wood where possible, though it can be more difficult to find out whether it was treated with preservatives. Avoid the use of preservatives wherever possible. They are, by their nature, persistent and toxic products.
- Buy new timber from sustainable sources. Look out for accredited wood products such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).
- Most timber sold for outdoor use may already have been treated with preservative and not labelled as such, eg 'pressure treated timber'. Timber sold for indoor use is likely to be more expensive, but will be untreated. Scaffolding boards are good for bed edging, being sturdy and a good width. They are usually untreated, but always ask
- See Garden Organic Guidelines (on DVD).

### Suppliers

- The Organic Gardening Catalogue [www.organiccatalogue.com](http://www.organiccatalogue.com)
- Harrod Horticulture [www.harrodhorticultural.com](http://www.harrodhorticultural.com)
- Recycleworks [www.recycleworks.co.uk](http://www.recycleworks.co.uk)
- Link-A-Bord [www.link-a-bord.com](http://www.link-a-bord.com)

We are unable to recommend any particular supplier, but hope the above are a useful start. See also B7.6



A range of raised beds in schools



## Building instructions for raised beds (wooden frame)

The following describes how to build low and higher raised beds. There are lots of other ways and plenty of scope for experimenting (see B4.5). As a guide, a raised bed 1.8m long by 1.2m wide is a good size. It's easy to reach the middle without treading on the soil and not so long that you're tempted to walk across the soil rather than use the paths.

When using tools make sure to follow Health and Safety Guidelines.

Top tip



**Measurement conversion**

2.5cm = 1 inch

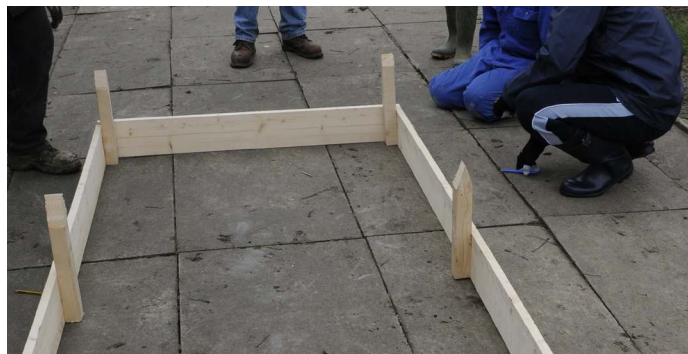
30cm = 1 foot

### Design 1: low edged raised bed (2.4x1.2m, 15cm high)

- 1 Materials (one bed; approx. £5-10)
  - 2 x 2.4m length, 15cm wide 2.5cm thick, sawn timber
  - 2 x 1.2m length, 15cm wide 2.5cm thick, sawn timber
  - 6 x 30cm length, 5cm<sup>2</sup> pointed posts
  - Lots of 75mm long, 25mm flat head galvanised nails
  - Increase materials for the number of beds required
- 2 Place two 30cm posts on the ground, nailing a length of the 2.4m wood to the topside of each post (two nails per post).
- 3 Measure the 2.4m length of wood to find the mid-point and nail a third 30cm post at the centre.
- 4 Repeat steps two and three to form the other (longest) side of the bed.



- 5 Nail a 1.2m length of wood to each end of the two side pieces, repeating at the other end to complete the bed.



- 6 Carefully lift and move the bed into its final location.



- 7 If needed, mark round the edges of the bed with a spade and remove any turf inside (see A14).



- 8 With the posts pointing down, knock the bed into the soil until the bottom of the wooden planks are level with the surrounding soil. You may need to loosen or lower the soil level in places to get the bed level (lower still if making paths that require trenches either side (see A16),



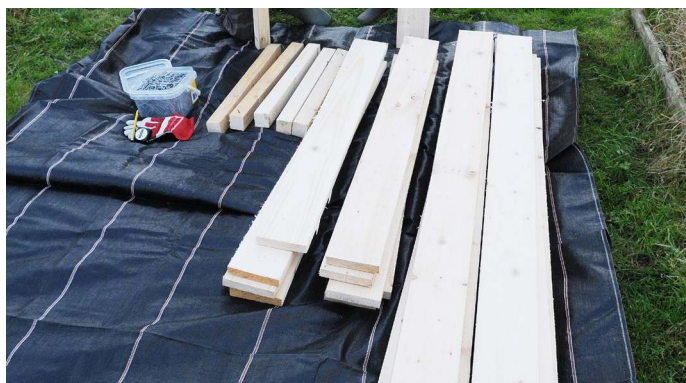
- 9 Dig over the soil inside the bed if needed (see A26). This shallow bed is unlikely to need extra soil after it is dug and organic matter added to improve fertility (see A9). If making paths between beds, then any spare soil from path trenches can be added to beds (see A16).





## Design 2: higher raised bed (1.8x1.2m, 75cm high)

- 1 Materials (one bed, approx. £20-30)
  - 10 x 1.8m length, 15cm wide, 2.5cm thick sawn timber
  - 10 x 1.2m length, 15cm wide, 2.5cm thick sawn timber
  - 6 x 70cm length, 5cm<sup>2</sup> pointed posts
  - Lots of 75mm long, 25mm flat head galvanised nails
  - Increase the materials for the number of beds required
- 2 Place two 70cm posts on the ground, nailing a length of the 1.8m wood to the topside of each post (two nails per post).



- 3 Measure the 1.8m length of wood to find the mid-point and nail a third 70cm post at the centre.



- 4 To form one side of the bed, nail four 1.8m lengths of wood next to the first, butting them as closely as possible (the final height will be 5cm above the height of the post; this gives a nicer finish).

NOTE: for a shorter construction, reduce the number of planks and height of the posts.



- 5 Repeat steps two to four to form the other side of the bed.





- 6** Stand both sides of the bed on level ground. Line up and nail a 1.2m length of wood at the bottom of each side.



- 7** Nail another 1.2m length of wood at the bottom of the other side. The bed should stand by itself with the bottom plank for each end of the bed in place.



- 8** To finish the ends of the bed, nail four 1.2m lengths of wood next to the first on each side, butting them as closely as possible.



- 9** Manoeuvre the bed into its final position. It will take approximately 1.5 tonnes of soil to fill. Use soil from a spare pile in your garden or buy top soil from a local supplier. Then treat the soil as usual (see B4.4/A9). The soil level will sink as it settles and may need topping up. Don't fill beds with just compost as this will quickly sink.



- 10** Construct paths between beds if necessary (see A16) and begin planting up your bed for lovely, fresh organic produce to eat!

