



# GARDEN 4 LIFE

## RAISED BED GARDENING BASICS

*Things to consider before starting:*

- You may want to consider how long you want your garden to last
- You may need your garden to perform differently to meet physical needs or to reduce the time spent maintaining it

### **Building Your Raised Bed Garden**

When choosing a material to build your garden, consider how long you want your garden to last and if the material will impact your garden contents.

At Garden4Life, we prefer to use dry stacked concrete blocks. They are long lasting, provide opportunities to fit other structures within the holes (tomato cages, hoops, etc), provide a spot to plant other things such as cut flowers within the holes, and give a comfortable seat from which to garden.

While there are many materials you can build a raised bed garden out of, we prefer a more permanent structure as compared to wood that can rot, or rail road ties that can leach out chemicals into your soil.





### **Filling Your Raised Bed Garden**

Now that it's built, it's time to fill your raised bed garden. There are many things you can fill your garden with, but it's important to consider what the impact of your choice will be as your garden matures.

We opt to use a weed-free, soil-less growing medium at Garden4Life. This provides several benefits. It contains no weed seeds that may be mixed in with traditional garden soil, and it is a ph balanced medium requiring no added work of optimizing for plant growth.

Additionally, a loose well drained medium is essential for most plants. One way of achieving this is to mix a dry medium in with traditional garden soil. We prefer, however, to use a medium that is naturally loose and well drained. This reduces the amount of labor and lets us focus on what we love—growing an abundant garden.

Another important factor to consider in filling your raised bed garden is what to use for fertilizer. There are many options, but considering the impacts of each will save time and labor in the end. Manure may stand out as a good choice, but can introduce weed seeds into your garden that will cause more work in the future. Manufactured fertilizer can be a good option, but you'll want to make sure you're giving your plants the best chance to thrive. Basic fertilizers supply a plant with nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (NPK). While good for a plant, these leave out several trace minerals that really complete a plant's nutrition.



## **Planting Your Raised Bed Garden**

What you can plant and how much you can plant will depend on the medium you use to fill your raised bed. There are many tried and true methods such as permaculture gardening and square-foot gardening. Using our weed-free, soil-less growing medium, at Garden4Life we plant on the square inch. This means more production and more opportunities for succession and companion planting.

While each plant may require different things in order to thrive, if you're planting several plants from seed, you may find the use of a planting board helpful. This can be made simply using a plywood board and dowels. Cut the dowels to the correct depth, set them the correct distance apart, attach them to the plywood, and you'll make short work of planting your freshly filled raised bed garden.

### ***Succession Planting***

It's important to keep in mind your goals for harvesting while planting your raised bed garden. If you're planning on preserving your harvest by canning or another method, you may want all of your produce to come in at once. However, if you're expecting to eat the produce from your garden fresh over the course of a season, you may want to consider succession planting. By starting your seeds at different times, you can assure a steady supply of fresh produce that won't have to be harvested all at once. Planning out your raised bed to meet these goals is essential and should be taken into consideration when beginning to plant.

### ***Companion Planting***

Once you've taken the time to carefully set up a raised bed, you'll want to take advantage of as much of it as possible. One way to do this, is to practice companion planting. Some plants do well next to each other in a garden. For example, we plant a bed of onions and tomatoes. Starting with the onions, as space becomes available from harvesting, we will plant tomato plants in with the onions.



### **Watering Your Raised Bed Garden**

You've taken a lot of care to pick out the perfect spot for your raised bed garden, picked a long lasting material to build it out of, and carefully considered a material to fill it with that will save work in the future. You've planned out the plants you want to produce, and have taken into account their harvest times. With all this planning, you want to make sure your plants are not just depending on Mother Nature to water your garden. There are many ways to achieve this; soaker hoses, drip lines, etc. We have had the best luck with 1/2" poly tubing feeding to 1/4" tubing with attached overhead sprayers. Combined with a timer, this ensures your plants get all the water they need while conserving water and being as efficient as possible.

*There are many things to consider when setting up a raised bed garden. We hope this has given you some things to think about and will help your garden grow to it's full potential. We are happy to answer any questions you have about raised bed gardening, regardless of what method you choose to use.*

*Happy gardening!*