

A NUMPTIES GUIDE TO RAISED BEDS!

By Nick Green, founder of the Incredible Edible Farm



Our Pauline was asking about raised beds today and it made my brain think I should write down all wot i know so that others can follow my budda like raised beddery wisdom, like.

- 1) Tanalised, (pressure treated, pale green stuff) softwood (unless you'r not in the uk and can therefore buy decent durable timber). Larch is also a durable option if you can get it but don't think about hardwood or plastic, Tanilised timber, providing its thick enough will last 15-20 years.
- 2) You need sawn (not planed) planks 2" (50mm) thick by about 8"-10" (200-250mm) wide and about 5M long, cost around £11-15 each depending on how much you buy. Do not buy decking timber for this, its very expensive. You need 6 planks/ bed (or 5.3 planks if your building several) so about £60-£90 each bed.
- 3) Shop around, look under timber merchants, in yellow pages, on no account buy in DIY supermarket, it will be dear and poor quality. Most suppliers deliver. If you have forests/ sawmills nearby try them. Ask a green fingered builder/carpenter, they may be able to get a better discount from thier regular supplier.
- 4) Build big, but not wide. I use the 5m long (actually 4.8M) and cut them into 1.6 M for the ends. You need a bed you can comfortably reach half way across. Maybee build them at 1.2m wide for small children.
- 5) Liners, dont line beds with plastic, this achieves nothing except wasting cash. It traps water against the wood and makes it rot quicker
- 6) in the bottom of your bed, put nothing but soil. Even if its over tarmac or concrete. If its on grass no need to dig the turf out.
- 7) Two planks high is enough. If you want a wast high bed fill the bottom half with subsoil if you can get it free from a building site or landscape gardener, it will save big money.
- 8) There is no rule 8. Make one up if you like!
- 9) Soil, council compost is good, and could be free, A cubic metre is approx equivalent to a ton. So a 4.8 X 1.6 x 0.5 M bed is 3.84 cubic metres about 4 tons. Expect to pay minimum of £30 a ton for good topsoil.
- 10) Screw your beds together with 3.5" x12 gauge screws, not nails, easier to do if you have a good cordless drill, and easier to take apart if need be.
- 11) use 2" square corner pieces, sticking up 2-3' usefull for netting, etc.
- 12) Should be rule one realy but i only just thunk of it. Dont build raised beds unless you need to, use where ground is wet, shallow, or polluted, but if you can grow directly in the ground, do that!





13) No worshipping false idols now, you know its not good to do that!

I cant believe this piece is 4 years old, lots of water under the bridge and some ideas have changed in the light of experience.

We made beds 1.2 metres wide to get maximum use of a full 4.8m plank. Not so great in practice, 1 metre wide is better to reach everything without walking on the soil.

With one plank high beds on turf we would flip it over, no need to on a 2 plank high bed.

And, the questions often asked are why raised beds? why wooden plank surrounds?

Our Todmorden soil is often shallow rocky brick filled demolition site, and sometimes suspect re polutants from long past industrial use sohard to grow veg direct in the ground.

Raised beds give much better yield (you can reduce spacing between plants), the reason is better root aeration (esp if you don't trample the soil) and the soil drains better important in our high rainfall climate.

And its all much neater, important in the town centre and it makes it easier to direct helpers, its clear where the bed begins and ends!

At Incredible Farm weve added plastic water pipe hoops which can be for clear polythene to make it into a mini polytunnel, or mesh to keep leaf hoppers or cabbage white butterflies off your cabbages.

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