

Raised Bed Gardening

Cabin Fever Day Hyannis Country Garden

- The beauty of raised beds is having planting areas that you don't step on. This keeps soil structure intact. You can grow more plants in an intensive setting this way. Build them only 4 feet deep so that they can be tended from each side without stepping in.
- Do not line the bottom with plastic or landscape fabric. Many plants will send roots into native soil. If possible, turn native soil and amend with compost/manure before building and filling raised beds.
- Fill beds with real soil/loam mixed with compost/manure. Do not use potting soil. Use compost instead of peat although coconut coir is fine to add to the compost/manure.
- Mound the soil up a bit the first year – it will settle at least 2 to 3 inches over the first season.
- Replenish soil with compost/manure annually or mix in chopped leaves in the fall. Every four or five years you'll want to add more loam as well.
- For areas with several raised beds you can either have the spaces between bed as lawn or mulch these areas using newspaper/catalogs with mulch on top.
- As with all vegetable/annual/perennial gardens, deep soaking less often is better than a little every day. (Attention: Hand watering is never enough!)
- It's possible in well-amended raised beds to plant things very thickly – this produces a good crop and shades out weeds. You can cut recommended planting distances in half.
- Be sure to visit the Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens at the Barnstable County Fairgrounds during the fair to see raised beds in action.