

4' x 8' Raised Garden Bed Building Instructions

Material List

- 3 2" x 10" x 8' Treated Lumber
- 1 4" x 4" x 4' Treated Lumber
- 32 4" Exterior Screws Rated for Treated Lumber
- Cardboard, newspaper, or burlap (optional but recommended)
- Drill
- 1 Cubic Yards of Soil

Note: These instructions are for a 4'x8' raised bed. You can use these same instructions to build a bed of any dimension. However, we do not recommend making one wider than 4'. Four feet is the maximum width of bed most people can reach everything from the edge without having to step in the bed. Also note that 8' or 10' boards are usually the longest that will fit in most vehicles and if you go longer than 12' the beds can bow significantly over time.

Information About Raised Beds

Raised beds are a great way to grow edible and ornamental plants. Raised beds allow you to bring in high quality soil to grow plants, which is usually in short supply around houses where good topsoil was scraped off or mixed with much lower quality clay subsoil during construction. Bringing in soil for the raised bed also allows you to minimize the possible danger of soil contaminants like lead. The added height also makes working in the bed easier while creating a nice defined border for the garden that keeps everything looking neat and tidy.

Deciding Where to Put the Raised Bed

Remember that if you want to grow vegetables, you should put your raised bed in an area that gets at least eight - ten hours of full sunlight a day during the growing season. If your bed receives less than eight - ten hours of sunlight, you can still grow vegetables, but it will result in lower yields. You also want to pick a spot that is level.

It is fine if there is a slight slope. Fill in and level any wet or boggy areas and any holes to level the ground and help with drainage.

Once you have a general idea of where you want the raised bed to go, you can decide exactly where you want it. Although you can put the bed against something like a fence or wall, having at least 4 feet on each side will allow you to easily reach everything in the bed and provide enough space to get a wheelbarrow around all sides. Some gardeners recommend orienting the 10-foot side of the bed on the east west axis so that you can plant more tall plants without shading other shorter plants.

If desired, you can draw a sketch of your lot and move around a piece of paper representing the bed to decide where it looks best before you start assembling it. Be sure to make your sketch and bed to scale to avoid surprises.

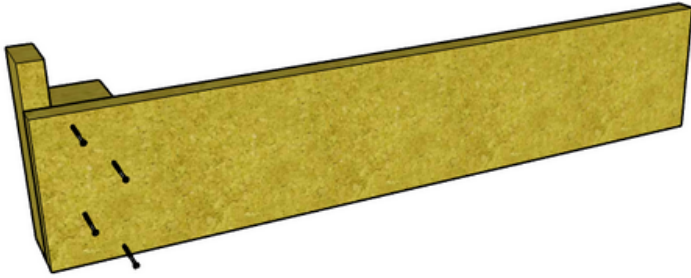
Assembling the Raised Bed

Note: It is usually much easier to assemble the bed at its final location than to try and move the bed once assembled.

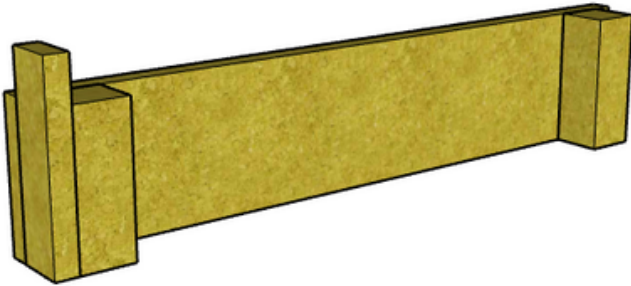
Step 1 - Cut and Assemble End-Boards

Cut one of the 2" x 10" x 8' board into two 4' long sections, these are the end-boards. Then from the 4" x 4" x 4' board cut four 9" long pieces, these are the corner support blocks. Using a scrap of 2" x 4", place the 2" side flush with the end of the 2" x 10" x 4' piece as a spacer. Then, using four screws in a diagonal pattern, attach one support block to the end-board.





Repeat this on the other side of the end-board so there is a support block on both ends of the end-board, as shown below.

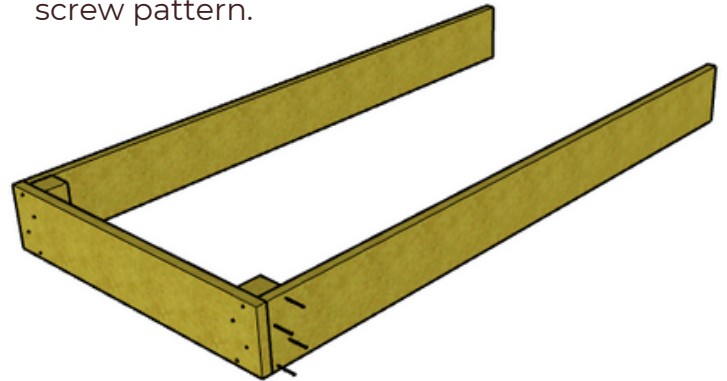


Repeat this on the other 2" x 10" x 4' board you cut in order to complete both end-boards. You should now have two endboards that look like this:



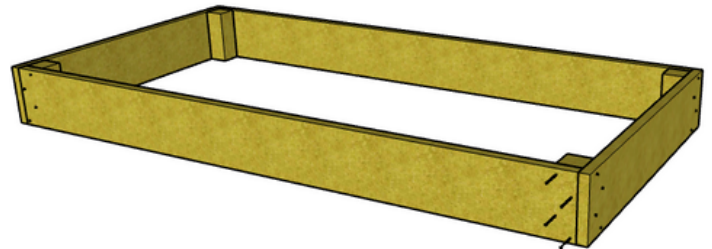
Step 2 - Attach Side Boards

Secure the side boards to the support blocks on one of the end boards using the same screw pattern.



Step 3 - Attach Final End-Board

Slide the second end-board to fit into the two side boards, and attach like in step 2



Your bed is now complete!



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Filling the Bed

Once the raised bed is assembled and placed where you want it, we recommend lining the bottom of the bed with some sort of compostable material to smother grass and weeds. Good materials for this are cardboard, several layers of newspaper, or even burlap bags. We do not recommend weed mat or plastic as these materials can restrict water flow and root growth.

Fill the bed with soil, mounding the soil over the top of the bed height since the soil will settle over time. Each 4'x8' bed will require 1 cubic yards of soil. Note: If you build a different size bed St. Louis Composting has a calculator to figure out how much soil you need. We recommend the "Garden Mix" soil from St. Louis Composting or an equivalent product.

You can continue to top off your bed each year with compost, composted manure, leaf mulch, or another source of organic matter to maintain the fertility and keep the bed nice and full.

That's it. You are ready to start growing!

Resources

Soil Source

St. Louis Composting

(636) 861-3344

<http://stlcompost.com>

Call or see their website for locations in the St. Louis region



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