

BEST GARDEN CHANNEL



A bed worth building

The raised-bed planning guide



SITE • SIZE • SOIL • BUDGET

Find a place you'll enjoy tending.

The best bed is the one that fits your garden and your day. Start with the route you will walk, the water you will carry and the light your crops will receive.



Illustrated garden study; not a crop-spacing or construction plan.

Follow the light.

Observe the actual site morning, midday and afternoon. Tomatoes, peppers and eggplant generally need 6-8 hours of direct sun. Check seasonal shade, too. [1,2]

Make water convenient.

Check that the hose reaches and excess water can drain. Walk the route with a wheelbarrow. Include gates, turns and room to work beside the bed. [2]

DO THIS FIRST Mark the outline with a hose or string. Leave it in place for a day and notice what it gets in the way of.

The hidden cost of a taller bed.

More height can reduce bending. It also changes your reach, the amount of fill and the complete cost. Decide on a useful height before shopping.

32

CUBIC FEET

8 × 4 ft, filled 12 in deep

64

CUBIC FEET

at 24 in deep

*Same footprint.
Twice the fill.*

Use inside measurements and the intended soil depth. These examples show geometric volume before settling, not recommended planting depths.

THE THREE-NUMBER CALCULATION

Length (ft) × width (ft) × depth (in) ÷ 12 = cubic feet

Cubic feet ÷ 27 = cubic yards

Can you reach the middle?

Test at the planned height, from your usual working position. Access from one side needs a narrower bed. Leave room for your tools and mobility needs; keep feet off the growing soil. [1]

Bags or a delivery?

Divide cubic feet by the printed bag volume and round up. At 12 inches, this 8 × 4 ft example needs 16 two-cubic-foot bags, or about 1.19 cubic yards. Ask about settling and bulk minimums.

Curved or tapered beds need their actual shape taken into account. A tall frame over soil and a closed-bottom planter can need different growing media and drainage arrangements. [1,2]

Price the whole project. Then choose the frame.

Use the same fill volume in each quote. A lower price per bag or yard does not tell you the delivered cost.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

Illustrative prices only. Replace them with your local quotes.

ITEM	BAGGED OPTION	BULK OPTION
Frame + hardware	\$180	\$180
Fill	16 bags × \$8 = \$128	1.25 yd³ × \$70 = \$87.50
Delivery or pickup	\$15	\$85
Irrigation + plants	\$65	\$65
Complete project	\$388	\$417.50

In this example, the smaller bagged purchase wins after delivery. A different supplier, larger order or shared delivery could change the answer. The bulk example rounds up the calculated 1.19 yd³; check the supplier's ordering increments.

Ask what is missing.

Site preparation, tools, a liner if the design needs one, mulch, irrigation and delivery access can all change the total. Separate what you already own from what you must buy.

USE THE FREE BED-COST CALCULATOR →

A good bed starts before the soil arrives.

Resolve the awkward questions while moving a string outline is still easier than moving a full bed.

01

Check what is underneath.

Over garden soil, an open bottom lets roots grow into the ground. Address weeds and drainage first. Barriers are often unnecessary over soil and may restrict roots. [1,2]

02

Treat paving differently.

On paving or in an elevated planter, consider outlets, the destination of runoff, medium and weight. Check structural capacity before using a deck or balcony. [1,2]

03

Confirm the exact material.

Ask what is in the fill and what growing system it is intended for. A generic name such as “garden blend” does not tell you its ingredients. Use the companion soil guide.

04

Prepare the delivery route.

Check gates, turns and the drop location. Have the bed assembled and the access route clear. Discuss quantity, minimum order and delivery conditions before paying.

Before planting

Water to observe drainage and settling. Recheck the fill level and your access. If the site stays wet or its soil history raises contamination concerns, resolve those questions before growing food there.

Your one-bed brief.

One page to take outside or to the supplier. Print it, or type into the ruled spaces in a PDF reader and save your own copy.

Site, crops and observed sunlight

Inside dimensions, filled depth and comfortable access

Fill volume, chosen medium and supplier

Delivered budget and what I already own

Question to resolve, next action and date

READ FURTHER

[1] University of Minnesota Extension · Raised bed gardens

[2] Utah State University Extension · Raised Bed Gardening

Companion soil guide + calculator: bestgardenchannel.com/bed-planning-kit

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