

Communities Biodiversity Project

RAISED BEDS AND PLANTERS

Materials used to make raised beds and planters

- Old decking boards
- Pallets
- Reclaimed boards
- Untreated sleepers
- Old bricks or blocks
- Old pipes
- Anything that will hold soil.



Containers

- These can be bought or made out of recycled materials.
- They must have some holes in the bottom for drainage but if they don't, drill some.
- The larger the container the better.

Raised beds

- Line the inside sides of your beds with damp proof course or heavy plastic sheeting.
- Apply environmentally friendly wood preserve to the outside once a year.
- Leave at least 1m between beds so that you have room for wheelchair access and room for a wheelbarrow.
- Make a section of your raised beds 2-3ft high to facilitate anyone in a wheelchair.

Position (in relation to the sun)

- If you are lucky enough to have a space facing south, south east or south west you will be able to grow almost anything.
- **Plants for shady areas** – mint, parsley, chives, salad leaves, root crops like potatoes, beetroot and carrots, radishes, rhubarb.
- **Plants which prefer full sun** – Mediterranean herbs such as thyme and rosemary, and fruit so that it ripens properly.
- **Inside on your window sills** – basil, pea-shoots, micro cress, parsley, coriander.

Remember that all containers must have drainage holes.

Speedy crops

- Rocket
- Radishes
- Spring onions
- Baby carrots
- Pea shoots
- Micro cress



Herbs (annual)

- Chervil
- Coriander
- Parsley

Herbs (perennial)

- Rosemary
- French Tarragon
- Thyme
- Bay tree
- Mint
- Herb Fennel
- Wild rocket



Notes:

Benefits of growing in raised beds

- Soil quality
- Soil warms up earlier in Spring
- Easier to manage
- Easier to keep pests out
- Easier on your back
- Easier to work at
- Better for drainage
- No digging required

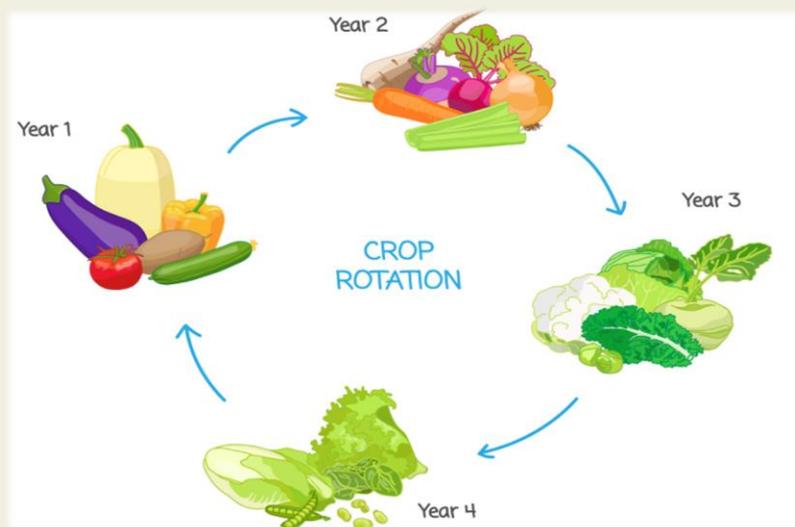
How to look after raised beds

- Use seaweed feeds
- Use organic feed
- Try not to walk on them
- Add a layer of homemade compost

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5M-Wz8epIE&list=PLzvXgH2oyJyfdDy3g465-x7-kaRoZN_zF&index=3

Crop rotation

- It is better not to grow the same crops in the same place year after year.
- Most vegetables are a member of a “family” If the same family is grown in the same place continuously there can be a build up of pests and diseases.
- Try to aim for a 3 or 4 year rotation.
- Group them by plant family.



Legumes

Fabaceae (legumes)

Green/String Beans
Dry/Soup beans
Peas
Fava beans
Soybeans
Peanuts
Chickpeas
Cowpeas
Alfalfa

Nightshades

Solanaceae
(Potato family)

Tomatoes
Peppers (hot, sweet, bell)
Eggplant
Potatoes
Tobacco

Sunflower

Asteraceae

Lettuce
Endive
Salsify
Sunflower
Artichokes

Alliums

Alliaceae
(Alliums/onion family)

Garlic
Onions
Leeks
Chives

Brassicas

Brassicaceae/Cruciferae
(Mustards)

Broccoli
Cauliflower
Brussel Sprouts
Kale
Kohl Rabi
Collards
Rutabaga
Turnip
Mustard greens
Asian greens/bok choi
Radishes

Chenopodiaceae

Spinach
Beets
Swiss Chard

Carrot

Carrots
Parsnips
Celery
Celeriac
Fennel
Herbs: Coriander
Parsley, Dill

Gourds

Cucurbitaceae
(Curbits/fruited vines)

Cucumbers
Muskmelons
Watermelons
Summer Squash/zucchini
Winter Squash/pumpkins
Gourds/luffa

Notes:

TIPS ON HARVESTING

Root crops

- Pick them when they look big enough.
- They usually sit above the ground a bit.
- You can harvest them when they are still small.

Onions and garlic

- These are usually ready in May/June.
- Leaves will be yellow.
- They usually sit above the ground a bit.

Fruit

- It comes off the tree easily.
- Smell ripe, deep colour.
- Always taste before you start to harvest.

WINDOWSILL IDEAS

Pea Shoots (windowsill)

- Use a flower pot, yoghurt pot or a medium sized recycled container. Punch holes in the bottom for drainage if there aren't some there already.
- 3/4 fill with compost and sprinkle 8-10 peas on top (or more if you have a larger container). Any dried pea you buy in the corner shop is ok. Soaking the peas overnight or for even an hour beforehand will speed up the process.
- Cover with compost (about 2cm), water well & place in a sunny spot indoors or outside. Remember to put a dish or saucer underneath to catch the water if placing on a window sill.
- Keep moist but not too wet.
- In a few days green shoots will appear. In about 15-30 days you should have perfect pea shoots. Simply cut about 3 cm up (above first set of leaves). They will then regrow once more.

Salad leaves (windowsill)

- Salad leaves can be grown in large pots and recycled containers so long as about 15cm deep and have drainage holes in the bottom.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ fill the container with peat free compost and sprinkle some seeds over the surface.
- Lightly over with compost (about 1cm), water well & place in a sunny spot on a windowsill or other Remember to put a dish or saucer underneath to catch the water if placing on a window sill.
- Water well and place
- Water occasionally, when the soil feels dry.
- They should be big enough to harvest in 5-8 weeks depending on variety and time of year.
- When leaves are approx. 10cm cut a handful of leaves about 2-3cm up from the base. Alternatively, you can pick off and use the largest outside leaves.
- They will sprout again 2-3 times.
- Can be sown inside from February to early October.
- **Varieties** – order ‘cut and come again’ seed mixes or baby leaf varieties such as mizuna, rocket, pak choi, or mustard leaf.

Basil/Parsley/Coriander (ideal for windowsills)

- Soft herbs can be grown in large pots and recycled containers so long as they have drainage holes in the bottom. You can start them off in small recycled containers such as small yoghurt pots. Put some holes in the bottom.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ fill the pot or container with peat free compost and sprinkle 2 or 3 seeds over the surface.
- Lightly over with compost (about 1cm), water well & place in a sunny spot on a windowsill or other bright place. Remember to put a dish or saucer underneath to catch the water if placing on a window sill.
- It can take from 1 week to 3 weeks for seeds to germinate so watch for those green shoots peeking through.
- Water occasionally, when the soil feels dry. The compost should not be soaking wet.
- When the baby herbs grow to the point where you can see roots coming out of the holes in the bottom, move them into a bigger pot or recycled so they have more space to grow.
- When the plants are approx. 15cm tall pick off some of the largest outer leaves for using in your cooking.
- They will keep growing and producing new leaves for a long time.
- Keep sowing a fresh batch every few weeks for a continuous supply. Can be sown inside from February/March to early October.

Radishes (windowsill)

- Radishes are a fast salad crop which can be grown indoors and are ready to eat in 4-6 weeks.
- They can be grown in large pots and recycled containers so long as they are at least 10 – 12 cm deep and have drainage holes in the bottom.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ fill the container with peat free compost and sprinkle some seeds over the surface about 3 cm apart.
- Lightly cover with compost (about 1cm), water well & place in a sunny spot on a windowsill or other bright place. Remember to put a dish or saucer underneath to catch the water if placing on a window sill.
- Water occasionally, when the soil feels dry.
- The radish seed will produce leaves and then a small round or oval shaped root will begin to swell, changing colour depending on variety as it grows.
- They should be big enough to harvest when the roots are about 2-3cm in diameter.
- Pull the radish gently from the soil, give them a quick rinse in cold water and eat. The leaves are edible too; use in salads.
- Keep sowing a fresh batch every week or 2 for a continuous supply.
- Can be sown inside from February to late September.
- **Varieties** – Cherry Belle, French Breakfast, Scarlet Globe. Purple and pink varieties are available too such as Malaga Purple and Pink Beauty.

Notes:

PARSLEY

Sow

- Sow outdoors from early spring to the start of summer in well-drained soil in sun or partial shade. Sow seeds in shallow, 1cm (½in) deep trenches. Cover the trench and water. When they are large enough to handle, thin seedlings to 15cm (6in) apart with 15cm (6in) between rows.

Alternatively, grow in pots. Sow seeds thinly across a 25cm (10in) pot filled with seed compost, cover with a 1cm (½in) layer of compost and water. Leave in a cool spot to germinate and make sure the compost doesn't dry out. Germination can take up to six weeks, then when they are large enough to handle, thin out seedlings, leaving about 2cm (¾in) between plants.

Grow

- Keep well-watered, especially during hot, dry spells in summer.

Give plants a boost by feeding every few weeks with a balanced liquid fertiliser.

Remove flower heads to extend the cropping life of the plants.

Prevent plants from becoming unsightly and encourage new growth, by snipping off any lower shoots that start to turn yellow.

Harvesting

- Parsley can be harvested throughout the summer months. Take a few leafy stems from the outside of a clump, snipping them near the base with scissors.

The leaves are best used fresh, but can also be frozen or dried for use in winter.

To freeze, chop the leaves and add to an ice-cube tray, then top up with water and freeze. You can then simply add the cubes to your cooking whenever needed.

To dry, hang up a bunch of parsley in a warm, dark, well-ventilated place for a few weeks. When fully dried, crush the leaves and store in an air-tight jar.

BASIL

Sow

- Seeds are best started off indoors from late February to mid-summer. Fill a 7.5cm (3in) pot with seed compost, firm down and sow a few seeds of basil over the top – most will germinate so only sow a few more seeds than you need. Cover with a thin layer of vermiculite, water gently and pop it into a propagator. If you don't have one, don't worry. You can cover the pot with a small, clear freezer bag and secure with an elastic band.

After germination, remove from the propagator (or take the bag off) and keep damp. When the seedlings are large enough to handle and have developed their first true leaves (ignore the rounded seed leaves), give them their own 7.5cm (3in) pot filled with multi-purpose compost.

Grow

- Plant basil outside after all danger of frost has passed, choosing a sunny, sheltered spot with well-drained soil or grow plants in containers. You can keep a plant in a pot going all summer long by moving it into a slightly bigger container every time roots show through the drainage holes in the bottom – plants could end up in a 20cm (8in) container.

Basil hates having wet roots overnight, so aim to water plants in the morning if possible.

Keep plants bushy and productive by pinching the tips of branches regularly and remove any flowers that start to develop.

Harvesting

- Basil leaves can be harvested throughout the summer.

Remove leaves as required or harvest entire plants if lots of leaves are needed to make pesto or sauce.

If only a few leaves are required, remove the tops of plants to encourage bushy growth.

MUSTARD CRESS

- You need a plastic tray to sow your seeds in, without drainage holes.
- Put a layer of the tissue in the bottom of the plastic tray and make it damp. Be careful not to overwater.
- Sprinkle seeds onto tissue. You can crowd them in and you want plenty to harvest.
- Check back in a few hours. If you sow your seeds in the morning, then they may have started to germinate by bedtime – small white roots will be visible. By the next morning some of the seeds will be growing tiny shoots as well.
- Keep an eye on water levels. If the tissue dries out, then they will die.
- In about a week your seedlings will be an inch and a half all and will be ready for harvesting.
- Harvest your cress when you want to use it. It doesn't keep long once it has been cut



SUNFLOWER

- Grow time will vary depending on your variety, however most seeds germinate within 6 to 10 days. Maturity is reached within 80 to 120 days.
- Sunflower seeds enjoy well-drained soil. Sandy loam or sandy clay loam soils typically allow excellent drainage, and sunflowers perform well in them.
- Plant your seeds about one inch deep.
- Once your seeds have germinated, transplant the seedling to a larger pot or outside.
- Drainage holes are the most critical feature in a planting pot.
- For varieties that grow two to five feet tall, you will want to allow about 6 inches between each seedling, while larger types should be placed at least one foot apart.
- Putting them closer together may result in smaller flowers. After you have transplanted into your pot mulch can be added on top of the soil, carefully avoiding the stem. This will help to prevent moisture loss through evaporation.



WILDFLOWERS

Perennial wildflowers can also be sown in spring or in autumn so they can establish before winter sets in.

The latest date for autumn **sowing** is usually by end of October. The first flowering of annuals will take place in the spring/early summer after **sowing**. Perennials will not usually flower in the first year but should come back year after year.

Wildflowers usually will do best when kept watered until established (4 to 6 weeks).

- Sow some sparsely in a window box or large pot and watch the insects visit when they flower.
- If you have a grassy area that isn't sprayed or mown, rake or fork over some of the grass to expose some soil and sown some seeds there.



Notes: