

Build a raised bed and grow your own fruit and veggies



Tom Smart from Smart Permaculture has been working with Be-Zing to teach and encourage young people to grow their own fruit and vegetables, and help them understand the soil layering process.



In the video, he shows us how to build a raised garden bed using untreated wood, however if you only have limited space, you can use any creative containers to grow your own food. Perhaps an old drawer, used cans, buckets, even a Wellington boot! Just make sure you drill holes into the base for the drainage.

So Get Creative and Have Fun

Building a raised garden bed



Raised beds can be purchased as a kit, or you can simply use wood from sleepers or scaffolding planks, placed on their side, and drilled together. You may need some assistance from an adult.

If you have limited space you can also buy mini grow beds ready to go.

Find a nice sunny spot, ideally on grass or soil to place your raised bed. It is possible to build on a patio but the bed would need to be properly lined.



Next Comes the 'Lasagne' Layering



Start with a layer of cardboard pieces. Cardboard stops weeds growing, and holds in water and nutrients. It will eventually decompose and become soil itself.

The next layer is called Hügelkultur. Constructed from decaying wood, leaves, debris and other compostable biomass, it's placed at the bottom of the bed to slowly decompose into rich soil to feed the plant roots.

Then sand is added which helps with drainage and nutrients

Compost comes next which is the best growing medium for planting

Finally a heavy 2/4" of Woodchips at the top, to keep the soil cool through the summer and warm through the winter. It also keeps the soil moist, and eventually it also breaks down to form soil itself.

This is Permaculture

Planting your fruit and vegetables



Next comes the planting. In this guide, we've used 11 different fruit & vegetables :- Strawberries, raspberries, cucumbers, carrots, tomatoes, apples, pears, plums, cherries, sugar snaps & sweetcorn.

All these plants are best if planted into the ground or a raised bed, but can also be successfully grown in pots (although they will need extra watering). Don't be put off if you haven't got much space – give it a go!

These plants can be grown separately or in the same bed, mixed up or in rows. Be sure to give each plant enough space. When you first start planting, the bed will seem very bare, but it will soon fill out as your plants grow. Don't be tempted to over-plant!

You will need to buy some general purpose compost and plant food which can be purchased from most supermarkets and garden centres. Always read the label.

Don't forget to water often!



Apples pears plums & cherries

These come as trees. They can be purchased online as 'bare-root trees' which are much cheaper, or as small trees from your local garden centre. If buying online try www.yougarden.com . You can buy and plant these all year round although traditionally better to plant in autumn. Plant these into a large pot or ideally straight into the ground. Make sure to read the label and buy a DWARF tree! These will flower and should make fruit every year.

These will need plenty of water especially in their first year. If planted into a pot these will need regular watering throughout their life, if planted directly into the ground they will be largely self-sufficient after year 1.

The fruit will start to appear in the spring and will be ready to eat at the end of the summer/early autumn. When planting in the ground, plant each tree about 3-4 feet apart, but you can plant smaller plants in between.



Strawberries & Raspberries.



Buy these as small plants either online or from your garden centre in early spring (March). Plant 12 inches apart in raised beds or in pots, in a space with plenty of sun.

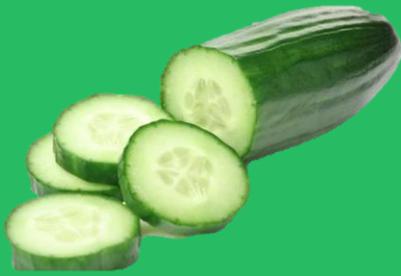
These plants stay low (about 30cm) but get very bushy so give them plenty of space. Fruit will generally be ready to eat in late May/June. Don't dig them up when the fruit is finished! They will grow back and continue to fruit year on year for 3-4 years.



Carrots.

These are root veg which means the edible bit grows underground and we only see the green leaves on the surface (the 'tops').

Ideally buy as small plants and plant into the ground, raised bed or large containers. Plant from April – July, about 15cm apart. Keep well watered. The carrots will be ready to harvest about 2-3 months after planting. You should see the top of the orange carrot poking out of the soil, this will show you how big the carrot underneath is. Pick earlier for mini carrots or later for fully grown!



Cucumbers.

These plants grow tall! Plant from seeds or buy small plants and keep indoors in pots from early spring (March). As they grow, transfer into bigger containers and keep on a sunny window sill. They can be put outside from early summer (June). As they start to grow they will probably need stakes for support. Train the stems up a trellis or wigwam and keep well watered. The cucumbers will be ready from mid summer – perfect for picking straight into lunchboxes. The more you pick, the more fruits will grow!



Sugar snaps

Another tall growing plant! Plant these from seeds or small plants into large pots or raised beds in a sheltered sunny corner from May onwards. Water regularly. If planting from seeds, plant each seed 5cm deep and well spaced apart. When they start to grow, use sticks or a wigwam to help support the stems. Pick the pods as soon as they look yummy for the best taste!



Tomatoes



These plants also grow very tall, up to 6 foot. They work well in a tomato 'grow bag' or raised bed, again in a sunny position. Buy as small plants or seeds from your garden centre in late spring and plant directly into the grow bag or bed, but keep protected from frost – cover with a blanket or bring inside for temperatures below 5°C at night. Water regularly and give tomato feed every 14 days. Depending on which variety you get they may need stakes for support – use bamboo canes pushed into the earth and string to tie the plants to the stakes.

Sweetcorn

Another very tall growing crop! Plant individual seeds from mid May onwards straight into a pot or raised bed. Plant each seed about 45cm apart (they need a lot of food from the soil!). Make sure the bed will get a lot of sun! Again keep well watered and ideally add a thick layer of good compost or manure over the ground to give them plenty of nutrients. Add stakes to help support them when they grow tall.

