

## Gardening Department

### Raised Garden Beds

With the trend toward fresh and natural fruit and vegetables, there is nothing fresher or more satisfying than “grow your own.” Raised beds are great for growing small fruits and vegetables. They keep less weeds from invading, prevent soil compaction, and provide good drainage. They allow for total control over soil composition, and provide easier work effort for planting and harvesting – therefore causing less back strain. With better soil composition, crop yields can be up to 50% more.

You can purchase ready-made kits to build your raised bed at Gasper’s online shop. Some are made from recycled plastic, and are expandable as your garden grows. Some of the better types are constructed of woods, such as pressure-treated or railroad ties. Never use chemically treated woods to construct a raised bed, as some of the chemicals can leach into the soil.

If you are handy you can build your own out of concrete wall stone, natural wallstone or untreated hardwoods. You can find help purchasing these products at Bucks County Hardscapes, the red contractor building at Gasper’s.

Before building your bed, till the ground underneath as deep as possible (up to 16”) to loosen the soil. Next, create your bed so that the long side faces south. Make sure your bed is as level as possible.

Next comes your soil mixture. The best mixture is 2 parts soil to 1 part compost. For small beds you can purchase bags of premium organic soil and compost like Bumper Crop, which is blended with up to 10 all-natural ingredients. For larger gardens, a soil/compost mix can be purchased by the yard such as Gasper’s Organic Soil Blend (with Soil King), and can be delivered to you for a small fee.

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### Raised Garden Beds (Continued)

This can be fortified with a few bags of Bumper Crop.

When working in your garden, use a board laid across the bed, avoiding stepping on your soil and compacting it. You will want to build or use trellises or cages for cucumbers, tomatoes, or vine crops to save space.

For rows between your plants, use a strip of landscape fabric with natural mulch on top to keep weeds down. Also, Preen makes an organic weed preventer made from corn gluten. It is important to use organic weed preventers and spray, or food-safe chemicals, on food that you and your family are going to consume. Read all labels before applying.

With a good garden plan and some timely planting, your raised planter can provide you with fresh produce from March to December.

