

Gardening Department

How to Build a New Bed

Congratulations! You have just decided to build a new bed for shrubs, flowers, or vegetables where only lawn or weeds were before. This new bed will take some work but will bring enjoyment for years to come.

The first step is to design your bed. First do this on paper being sure of the dimensions you wish it to be and space available. People usually underestimate the space needed for the plants that they wish to plant, so bigger are definitely better.

The next step is to layout the bed in its location. Use a garden hose or two to form the perimeter of your bed. Hose is flexible enough to make curves and straight lines and strong enough not to blow away. Next use marking paint or irrigation flags to replace the hose in your design.

Next you will need to remove the vegetation (grass) from the area to be used. The easiest way is to spray on all purpose herbicide like “Roundup” in the designated area. This will kill all grass and weeds but will take about a week to take full effect. If you cannot plan ahead nor have the time you can rent a “sod cutter” at a machine rental store. This will cut and lift the vegetation with little soil disturbances such as is done to produce commercial sod. After the machine passes the grass is easily lifted and can be placed in refuse bags and put into a compost pile.

Once the grass is removed, good compost or humus, such as Soil King Leaf Mold, should be tilled into the soil at least 8”, and up to 18” deep. This is important to help breakup the heavy clay soil. The addition of humus allows for more air and water penetration, moderates water and drainage temperature levels, provides nourishment for plants and soil organisms, and acts like a sponge to hold nutrients from being leached deeper into the soil.

For most beds, lime should also be added. Lime or concentrated calcium acts as a catalyst so that the maximum amount of ‘food’ is available to your plants.

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How to Build a New Bed (Continued)

After tilling the soil should be lightly raked with a bow rake. This will help settle the soil. This should not be done so hard as to re-compact the soil. After the soil is settled, yards of screened soil with compost added should be applied on top of the bed at the depth of at least 3”-6”. One yard of soil will cover fifty square feet (5’x10’) at a depth of six inches, use this as a guide. Soil will settle some so be generous in your estimation.

If you are not ready to plant, put a coating of Preen on top of the soil. This will suppress weeds until you are ready. You will disturb this layer when you plant but you can reapply.

When you plant, follow our tips about using Bumper Crop and Fertilizer. When plants are planted use a new layer of Preen and a layer of mulch or landscape fabric and mulch. You are now an accomplished gardener. Enjoy your creation for years to come.

