

## **Growing More In Less Space**

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Many years ago, vast numbers of the population lived in rural or farm areas. Almost every household had some type of garden or farm. Many of these folks were "truck farmers", which meant that they raised their crops and trucked them to the market. In fact, the F.M. (Farm to Market) roads that we use today were built to help farmers get their crops to market.

However, those days are gone, and few people "truck farm" anymore. The farm has been replaced with a city lot, or maybe an acre or two. In the last few years, the desire to grow flowers or a garden has grown tremendously. There is one major problem: Where can we grow vegetables on a small lot? The answer is "raised or container beds". A raised bed is simply raising the growing medium above the surrounding area. For example, a flowerpot is a raised bed, or a container.

The beauty and the ease of raised beds is that:

1. Uses less water and fertilizer
2. Gardening season starts earlier in spring and lasts longer in the fall
3. Weeds are much easier to control
4. Can grow much more, in less space and less time.
5. Raised beds have good drainage, so heavy rains cause less harm to the garden

Raised or container beds allow you to install the very best growing medium and keep it in place. The contained bed can be any shape and size that is desired. Only time, energy, money and space limit the size!

There are several advantages to raised bed gardening, but there are a few things you should NOT do:

1. Do not start too big. This leads to too much work and expense. Start smaller and then add more beds, as you desire, but if you start too big; it can become discouraging.

2. Do not make the beds too wide. A width of 36 to 42 inches is about the right inside width. It is much easier to gather your crops with this width bed. Then make it the length that you desire.

You can use almost any materials to build your raised bed: brick, concrete, stone, treated lumber, landscape timbers, or even used tires. Except for the tires, you can put the materials in the shape and height that you desire. They should be 6 to 8 inches deep at least.

Next, remove the grass, or kill it, or lay old newspapers, 6 to 10 sheets deep, on the ground over the grass. This will kill the grass. Fill your contained bed with growing medium, water it down well, so that it will settle. Add fertilizer as needed, depending on your growing medium, and you are ready to grow!

For more information on building a raised bed contact the Angelina County Extension office at 634-6414 or read the publication, "Building a Raised Bed" at

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/raisedbed/>

