

RAISED BEDS

Raised beds can be a useful addition to school grounds where space is at a premium, where there is no grass or where the quality of the soil is poor. Growing herbs, fruits and vegetables in raised beds has many advantages, for example supporting children's understanding of where our food comes, learning about lifecycles, experiencing seasonal change and enhancing the grounds for biodiversity.

Definition

A raised bed can take many forms, for example a tyre, a recycled plastic container, an old sink or a wooden structure. Children can be involved in every stage from identifying a sunny location within the grounds, to planning what to grow and when, sourcing suitable plants and seeds, planting, harvesting and cooking the produce. Raised beds are also an inclusive way to grow, providing access for everyone and reducing the need to bend or kneel.

Procedure

Identify the best location for your raised beds and consider design, layout and the number you need to achieve your aims without creating too many to maintain over time.

Avoid planting under trees and in other shaded spaces.

Growing in different types of raised beds offers a wider learning experience and a chance to experiment.

Include stones or gravel or sand in the base to support drainage.

You may wish to line your raised beds with weed suppressant membrane (available from garden centres) to avoid soil loss.

Increased footfall around the base of the beds may lead to grass erosion and mud. Avoid this by laying paving slabs, pea gravel or bark chippings around the raised beds or garden area.

A low level storage chest would provide easy access to gardening tools and



resources and consider how you are going to access water.

At the end of the growing season over the autumn and winter plant a green manure in each bed which is then dug into the soil at the start of the growing

season providing increased nutrients for your next crop.

Wooden raised beds offer the potential to include artwork in the garden, for example painting the sides or using mosaic tiles.



Tips

- There is lots of useful, free information regarding gardening and growing in schools, including planners that help you plant crops that can be grown and harvested in the academic year, online. Examples include: The Royal Horticultural Society <https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/home> and Garden Organic <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools>
- Remember to regularly water in dry weather. Soil in raised beds dries out quickly.
- Encourage staff to see the cross curricular opportunities available as well as focussing on growing food, for example links to Citizen Science, artwork, literacy and numeracy.

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