

York/Poquoson Master Gardeners Learning Garden at the Poquoson Museum 968 Poquoson Avenue, Poquoson, VA

Raised Bed Gardening

A raised bed garden is a garden built on top or above your native soil, sometimes incorporating native soil, sometimes not. They can be contained in a wooden frame or stone structure to keep the bed intact, or they can be more free form, with soil and amendments merely piled several inches high. They are the perfect solution for dealing with difficult soils or in areas prone to standing water or flooding. In addition, raised beds improve your garden's appearance and accessibility. Note: Most of the 18" high raised beds in this garden hold only 8"-10" of soil as they have a false bottom installed about 6" above the ground. This prevents standing water or moles, voles, etc. from disturbing the soil.

Gardeners with limited mobility find raised beds the perfect solution—a wide sill on a framed raised bed makes a good spot to sit while working. A high frame puts plants in reach of a gardener using a wheelchair.



Raised Bed with Wide Sill



Wheelchair Accessible

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Advantages of a Raised Bed Garden

Aside from avoiding the issue of gardening in poor soil, raised beds offer several advantages:

- They warm more quickly in spring, allowing you to work the soil and plant earlier.
- Soil amendments efforts are concentrated in the beds and not wasted on the pathways. You can tailor the soil for your raised bed to the plants you plan to grow.
- The soil is deep, loose, and fertile. Roots penetrate readily and weeds are easy to pull up.
- They drain better and you can plant anything from herbs and vegetables to perennials and shrubs in a raised bed.
- Plants can cover the entire surface of the bed areas, while gardeners work from the paths. Since gardeners stay in the pathways, the soil is never walked upon or compacted.
- After initial construction, less maintenance is required than for conventional garden beds. Note: The original raised beds in this garden have been in place since 2013 and have required no maintenance.

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