

Construction and Maintenance of Raised Bed Systems

1. Infrastructure

- Dig out paths following desire lines to establish an efficient network - along contour / equal bed width.
- Add soil to beds to increase depth of topsoil in beds - even depth / add more where thin.
- Install edging / Stake edges on the outside
- Path Surface exposed to elements/ Hardy Perennials (Comfrey/Balm)
- Annual Maintenance: Scraping Weeds / Clearing Paths

2. Soil Preparation

DIGGING (*Ploughing*)

- | Shaving / Scraping turf / weeds
- | Turn Clods
- | Incorporate Lime – rainfall and time
- | Invert and Mix Topsoil

FORKING (*Deep Tines / Chisel Ploughing*)

- | Remove Weed Roots
- | Introduce mature Bulky Organic Matter (*Muckspreading*)
- | Incorporate / Mix Soil with B.O.M. / Additives / Fertilisers

RAKING (*Scarifying*)

- | Break Clods Down into a Powdery Tilth
- | Remove sticks / stones / glass to edge or off bed

3. Planting

- Seedbed Preparation Rake off Stones and Unimproved Soil
- Sowing Seed Shape Drills / Rows / Furrows Sow and Cover Seed
- Transplanting Fork soil loose and friable
 - Make holes (deeper and wider than roots' immediate needs)
 - Placing plant and holding vertical Spread roots radially
 - Firm in strongly Level and shape soil round plant

4. Cropcare: Weeding and Hoeing Soil Cultivation and Sculpture

Ridging / Earthing up / Moats / Irrigation Mulching / Feeding
Watering / Liquid Feeding Spraying / Foliar Feeds

5. Harvesting Picking / Cutting / Collecting / Loading

Lifting / Pulling / Digging Out Drying / Storing
Cutting / Scything / Threshing / Baling (Combining)

TIPS:- Work from the Middle of the bed to the Edge on each side
Raking bed twice diagonally at right angles creates level surface

Raised Beds - FUNCTIONS and BENEFITS

Layout North-South Alignment + Beds along Contour

Paths

Width for Wheelbarrow etc. Wheelchair Access / Partially-Sighted

No loss of space if crops grow over & into paths

Perennial Green Manure (Comfrey)

Slug-Trapping (Planks etc.) - Slug-Free Zone if paths kept clear

Irrigation Supply water down path network

Drainage Shed Excess Downhill Frost Drainage

Collection Space for Crop Waste

Edges Minimum gaps (slugs)

Temporary / Permanent Material - Wood / Brick / Stone etc.

Terracing

Compensate for Slope Level Soil Surface / Increased Sun Exposure

Edge Lowest & Deepest Side First

Higher Side Unedged / Smaller / Thinner Edge

Raised Work-surface = Less Bending / Reduced Effort

Planning / Recording

Crop Rotation Soil Preparation for Specific Crop

Separate Different Crops Isolating Pests and Diseases

Soil

Increased Depth of Topsoil

Reduces Compaction Improves Structure

Improved Drainage Increased Moisture Retention

Deeper Rooting (Land Tide Soil Water Rise & Fall + Moon e.g. Dew)

No-Dig System / Contaminated Soil

Tilth for Seedbed - Rake stones into paths or to edge

Drawbacks

- | Windy Sites / High Ground

 - Drainage Unnecessary but other benefits apply

- | High Investment in Initial Infrastructure

 - Labour / Resources -- Effort Pays Back after 2nd Year

Especially good for Heavy / Clay soils

and Valley bottoms Frost-pockets Bad drainage