Raised Beds versus In-Ground Beds



Garden planning is not unlike interior decorating; you get to choose the style and shape of your furniture, and arrange everything just the way you like it. The type of planting bed to use is one of the first things to consider when installing your new fruit and vegetable garden. Here at Urban Plantations, we use both raised beds and in-ground beds depending on a number of factors.  These include the allotted space, preferences of our client, and factors like sunlight and soil-type.

To help self-starters plan their new fruit, vegetable, or herb gardens, we’ve compiled a list of benefits and drawbacks of installing raised beds vs. in-ground beds.

**Raised Beds: the Pros**

* Location location location!  Install a raised bed or prefabricated container to expand your potential growing space or take advantage of the available sunlight in your yard.
* Are you dealing with poor planting soil?  Raised beds give you the opportunity to instantly bring in new soil teeming with microbial life perfect for growing fruits, vegetables, and herbs.
* Raised beds can help keep some pests and rodents out of your garden!  By not stepping in the garden, you’ll prevent microscopic pests from hitchhiking on your shoes.  Line the bottom of your raised bed with hardware cloth to keep gophers out!  And don’t forget, [your pooch will be much less likely to dig in (let alone climb into) a raised bed.](http://urbanplantations.com/keeping-your-garden-pet-friendly/)
* The contained environment of a raised bed and (hopefully) level soil makes them perfect for [water-conscious irrigation like drip](http://urbanplantations.com/edible-gardens-in-the-california-drought/).  By the way, drip irrigation and other forms of localized irrigation can really help mitigate weeds!
* [Save your back](http://urbanplantations.com/urban-garden-health-benefits/) from leaning, hunching and kneeling.  We usually build raised beds about 18″ tall, but we’ve also put them on legs and even wheels.
* Raised beds and prefabricated container gardens can be quite beautiful.  Add some pop or color to your property, whether your aesthetic is sustainable redwood, corten steel, or any number of other options.
* Thinking about moving in the next few years?  With some planning, it’s possible to take your raised bed garden with you!

**Raised Beds: the Cons**

* Raised beds and prefabricated container gardens often come at a higher initial cost than planting in-ground.
* As with most things in life, raised beds do have a lifespan and could need the occasional repair before an eventual rebuild.
* If you live somewhere with poor soil health, avoiding the soil regeneration process by planting in a raised bed won’t help matters!
* Raised beds can limit root growth for some hardy growers, and is not recommended for fruit trees.
* They can reduce overall plantable square feet as you account for the material used (wood, for instance) and walking space.

**In-Ground Beds: the Pros**

* Costs associated with starting a fruit, vegetable, or herb garden in-ground are typically lower than installing a raised bed garden.
* In-ground planting can offer more plantable square feet, and is easier to take advantage of in odd-shaped spaces.
* If your property has healthy soil full of microbial life, all the hard work is already done!  Lightly fertilize and amend while planting.
* On the other hand, you might just be ready for a challenge!  Regenerating poor soil with organic amendments can bring back life to areas that have long been barren.
* Larger-scale growers typically prefer in-ground growing. Machines and tractors can be used to plant, fertilize and amend the soil, and treat for pests and diseases.

**In-Ground Beds: the Cons**

* Soil regeneration can take years!  Trying to plant vegetables or herbs in soil that has long been abused or ignored, or fruit trees in dirt that is more clay or sand can really curtail the potential of your new garden.
* Keeping pests, diseases, rodents, and even larger animals out of in-ground gardens can be a real challenge.
* It will take more effort to manage soil moisture with your irrigation, as water can quickly drain away beyond the reach of your plant’s roots.
* In-ground beds have the potential to look more “farmy,” and that aesthetic isn’t for everyone.
* Put on some work pants and dig out the knee pads, gardening in the ground can be a dirty, tough day!