

# Home Improvement & Gardening

## How and why to build a raised garden bed

(StatePoint) Fairly easy to construct and even easier to maintain, raised garden beds are a great way to raise plants and vegetables in the comfort and convenience of your backyard.

In a recent episode of the Exmark Original Series, "Done-in-A-Weekend-Extreme," landscape designer and show host, Doug Scott, spoke to organic gardener Joe Lamp'l of "Growing a Greener World" about the ins and outs of raised garden beds.

Here are some of the top insights and tips Lamp'l shared.

• Why use raised garden beds? A raised garden bed can help facilitate the ideal growing environment, as most people don't have that perfect soil naturally in their yard. Their accessibility makes them easier to work in and maintain. Plus, they're a nice architectural design element in any landscape.

• What's the ideal size? The main rule of the thumb applies to width. The bed should be no wider than 4 feet, as you never want to compact the soil when working.

Length however, is based on personal preference and needs. As far as height is concerned, you want the roots to be able to grow out and down as much as possible – 6-inches at minimum. While 12-inches is common, anything higher is a bonus.

• What materials work best? Treated lumber is the most readily available and economical material and will likely last the longest, however, being an organic gardener Lamp'l prefers untreated hardwood, as it lasts almost as long and doesn't contain chemicals. Other materials you have around the home and yard, such as rocks, old tubs, etc., can work too.

• Where's the best location? Build your raised garden bed on level ground, in full sun exposure near a water supply.

DIY Instructions:  
To build a 10-foot x 4-foot x 18-inch raised bed, you'll need:

- Nine 6-inch x 6-inch x 12-foot cedar timbers
- Tape measure, t-square and marking pencil
- A saw and extension cord

• One box of 10-inch heavy-duty exterior wood screws

• Ten 24-inch x 1/2-inch rebar stakes

• Twenty 10-inch galvanized timber spikes

• Sledgehammer

• Impact drill and long drill bit

• Level

• Hammer

• Shovels

• Hardware cloth, wire cutters and fence staples

• Work gloves, safety glasses and ear plugs

• Wheelbarrow (to transport soil)

1. Begin by cutting six, 6 x 6 timbers, each measuring 10-feet 6-inches in length. And six, 6 x 6 timbers, each measuring 4-feet 6-inches in length. Drill rebar holes in each timber.

2. Once the first layer of bed has been placed, leveled and squared in your desired location, fasten the corners using 10-inch wood screws. Secure the entire layer to the ground with 10 pieces of rebar.

3. Place the second layer of timbers, staggering the corners and fastening them with wood screws. Secure this layer to the

Raised garden beds create visual interest and an ideal growing environment.

first with ten 10-inch galvanized spikes.

4. Install galvanized cloth to prevent burrowing pests from eating earthworms and destroying plants.

5. Place the third layer of timbers (following above directions.)

6. Fill with soil and plants.

For more tips and complete build instructions, check out "How to Build Raised Garden Beds" by visiting [Exmark.com/backyard](http://Exmark.com/backyard). Exmark's Backyard Life is part of a unique multimedia destination with a focus on helping homeowners make the most of their backyard. There you can also access other series, including "Prime Cuts" and "Dream Yards."

For an amazing crop this season, take a cue from the professionals and build a raised garden bed for best results.



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## Outdoor living, indoor style

(NAPSA) The trend today is for decks that function as extensions of homes: comfortable, well-appointed outdoor rooms for eating, entertaining or unwinding. Adding a deck can be a smart way to expand usable space without the time, expense or inconvenience of an interior remodel or addition.

Here's more great news.

Thanks to ongoing advancements in technology, composite boards now bear a striking resemblance to genuine hardwoods.

For example, Fiberon Symmetry Decking uses a unique low-gloss formulation and micro-texturing process to create its signature matte finish. Adding to the "like-wood" appeal are natural, fluid grain patterns with no visible repeats or easy-to-discern patterns.

With the option of a hidden

fastener system, the decking can be installed without visible screws or nail heads, giving you a deck surface as smooth and barefoot friendly as your indoor floors.

One of the main reasons people buy composite decking is that it's low maintenance. There's no need to stain the decking after it's installed and no reason you'll ever have to sand, re-stain or refinish the boards down the road—so you save time and money.

When it comes to durability, composites are hard to beat. Symmetry Decking features a solid core fused to a patented cap layer called PermaTech. The composite core prevents splintering, cracking, warping and rotting. The cap layer provides exceptional resistance to staining. Composite decking can give you natural wood beauty without all the work, fading, moisture and insect

infestation—all common challenges with wood.

What about sustainability? Is composite decking really environmentally friendly? In a word, yes. No trees are ever felled to produce Fiberon decking. Instead, the company uses mainly recycled plastics and lumber mill scraps—enough to prevent 60,000 tons of waste from reaching landfills and incinerators each year. What's more, composite decking lasts far longer than typical pressure-treated lumber. That means you won't be dismantling or disposing of your deck anytime soon—and the greenest deck is the one you don't have to replace.

When it comes to building a beautiful, long-lasting, low-maintenance outdoor space, consider Fiberon capped composite decking. To learn more, visit [www.fiberondecking.com](http://www.fiberondecking.com).

ing.com.

Here are some quick tips for giving your deck a designer's touch:

**Amp up the color:** New seat cushions and pillows are an easy way to incorporate color and give your space an instant update.

For a more cohesive look, incorporate matching place mats, candleholders and other accessories. Change color schemes to suit the season, holiday or a specific event. When the temperatures start to dip, don't head inside. Simply add some colorful, cozy throws—a beautiful and practical way to extend the



Composite decking can give you natural wood beauty without all the work.

decking season.

**Master multitasking:** Storage boxes are excellent for keeping your colorful new accessories clean and dry. Look for sturdy ones with flat tops and you'll have instant side tables or extra seating for your next party.

**Light up the night:** Don't overlook lighting when planning your deck. Lighting adds ambiance and ensures safer footing for you and your guests. Fiberon has

options for rail posts, stair risers, even the edge of your deck. Here's a bright idea for lighting up your dining area: String white lights around the edges or inside of your table's umbrella. For a quick centerpiece, arrange candles of varying heights on a platter or tray. Add seasonal items such as pumpkins, gourds or pinecones for added interest. Always ensure lighting is safe for outside use and never leave lit candles unattended.

## Benefits of siding replacement

**By Brandon Sprague  
Vice President of  
Energy Exteriors NW,  
LLC**

Though most of us will never cross the bridge of having to reside our homes, when you do indeed need to, what are the benefits of doing so and why would I want to?

For many of us our home is our Castle and the single greatest investment we will have in our lives. It is where we laugh, we cry, and we build our fondest memories. So it's only right that the first benefit of residing our homes is to protect what is inside of it. When a home is re-sided, it's not just what you can see that is being replaced but rather a series of layers that are being put on to seal your home from the elements and the intrusion of water. Not only are you protecting the loved ones and possessions in the home, but you are ensuring that your home endures time and protects your initial investment.

There's not many things you can do on the exterior of your home that can have the impact siding does. While painting has a dramatic effect on the color and feel of the home, siding has the element of bringing texture and depth to your home that is unmatched by any other single project. This brings me to the second benefit. With the inventory of new homes being so low, it is a real chance for people to make their current home their dream home. Pulling up to your newly sided home is like pulling up to a completely different home, it can be that dramatic.

One of the biggest benefits is

peace of mind. You know that your home's exterior is brand new and you won't have to deal with the small fixes that come with being a homeowner. The third benefit is the ease of maintenance. Finally you can spend your time enjoying your exterior, friends and family as opposed to convincing them to come help you fix or complete small projects.

These are just a few that come immediately to mind when discussing the benefits of siding replacement, but there are several more that help ease the pains you feel every winter you have water intrusion and every summer you have to spend time to fix them instead of doing what you love to do. Re-siding has a very high rate of return from an investment stand point and makes you proud every time you come home from a long day at work to your beautiful home.



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## Renovating your home? How to protect your investment



Photo source: Houzz.com

Walk-in pantries are at the top of homeowners' wish lists.

(StatePoint) The increased time spent at home during the pandemic has resulted in many people deciding

to tackle home renovation projects. From creating a new office space or virtual learning area, to larger proj-

ects like bathroom renovations, many homeowners are making home improvements.

And the trend doesn't seem to be slowing down. In fact, the Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA) projects the remodeling industry will be even stronger in 2021, up 3.8% compared to 2020. During the pandemic, homeowners have fixed up or added on decks, updated landscaping and installed new roofs, among other projects. According to HomeAdvisor's latest annual State of Home Spending report, the number one completed project was interior painting – 35% of households painted in 2020, making a visual impact

with a low investment.

What's on your to-do list? If you're considering an upgrade but not sure where to start, check out the results of a national survey by Erie Insurance, conducted prior to the pandemic, which revealed what homeowners don't have, but wish they did. Here are the top five:

1. Walk-in pantry: This topped the list with just under a third of respondents (30%) saying they wish they had one. Kitchen renovations are typically on wish lists, and Houzz reported that demand for kitchen remodelers was up 40% in June 2020 compared to the year prior.

2. Granite countertops:

17.8%

3. Kitchen island: 16.8%

4. Tankless water heater: 16.4%

5. Finished basement: 16.2%

Regardless of the new features or upgrades you choose, it's important to let your insurance agent know so you can make sure you have enough homeowners insurance coverage.

"We understand how important the home is; that's why we provide coverage to suit every home and budget," says Bob Buckel, vice president and product manager at Erie Insurance.

Consider expanding your coverage beyond the standard

homeowners policy with endorsements – like equipment breakdown to cover that new tankless water heater. They can also cover sewer or drain backups and underground service lines. Adding these extra coverages to your home policy can provide you with the comfort knowing all the extra work you put into sprucing up your home will be protected. To make sure you have what you need for your home and everything in it, talk to an insurance agent or visit [ErieInsurance.com](http://ErieInsurance.com).

Making home updates can be as big or small an endeavor as you like. If you do take the plunge, be sure you protect your investment.

## Four tips to help you perk up your kitchen

(NAPS)—Remodeling a kitchen can be a great idea—for most families it is the heart of the home and most-used room—and it can be easier than you may realize, if you heed these four suggestions.

### Helpful Hints

1. Cabinet "magic": Instead of going through the trouble and expense of installing new, custom cabinets, give your current ones a coat of paint, new pulls and knobs or perhaps new doors.

2. Light up your life: It can be a bright idea to improve the lighting. Make sure overhead lighting is concentrated in those areas where you work the most, such as over the stove and sink. Under-cabinet lighting can also be a good idea.

3. Be sink smart: You

needn't change every appliance if they're working well but one thing that can give any kitchen a new look is to change the sink, the most-used appliance. For example, BLANCO sinks save space on the counter and make everyday cleaning and prepping easy. Those made of SILGRANIT are impervious to scratches, chips and stains while the company's newest stainless material, DURINOX, resists fingerprints and scratches. If you can, keep the plumbing in the same place it is now, to save time, trouble and money.

4. Clever, convenient accessories: A few little things can make a big difference. Sink accessories add functionality while letting you create your own personalized workstation. Custom stainless grids

and elegant drain covers and strainers can make prep work more pleasing, cleanup less complicated, and entertaining an event reserved for graciously accepting compliments.

As one kitchen designer put it: "Most clients are particular about aesthetics, but all clients insist on functionality. People want spaces that convey their personality, but most of all want their kitchen to make their lives easier."

In response, Blanco came up with grids that float inside the sink to dry dishes, elevate pots or wash vegetables; colanders and cutting boards that can sit on top of the sink or on a specially engineered ledge to save counter space and make prep work a dream. You have to set the colander inside the sink anyway, while

using the cutting board in the sink is a sneaky way to get in more counter space and make the job of prepping easier, too.

For further facts and tips and to see a variety of available accessories, go to [www.blancocomerica.com](http://www.blancocomerica.com).



Kitchen sink accessories such as "floating" colanders and cutting boards can add a splash of personality, a dash of sophistication and a pinch of much-needed convenience.