

Enhance Your Raised Bed Garden With The Best Vegetable Choices

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Several things influence which plants you select for your raised bed garden, like zone, amount of sun and your own preferences. But there are some good general guidelines for choosing vegetables from which everyone can benefit.

Don't plant vegetables you dislike. Home gardening is all about enjoyment. What's enjoyable about forcing your family to eat things they don't like just because you grew them at home. If there's no payoff of enjoyment waiting at harvest time, you might find it hard to go out and do the work you need, even in a low maintenance raised bed garden.

Excellent vegetable choices for this type of gardening include corn, cucumbers, beans, Swiss chard, lettuce, squash, radishes and tomatoes. Beginning gardeners should have no trouble growing these varieties. Another easy choice are herbs. Even if you're an experienced gardener, you might want to stick to these easier types when starting out with raised bed gardens.

How patient are you? If you hate to wait, you should select vegetables that reach maturity quickly. Spinach, beans, beets, squash, peas, carrots, cucumbers, radishes--all of these get you to first harvest in a hurry.

Another decision deals with early versus late growing season. Early season varieties like cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, lettuce, peas, parsley and spinach can actually be put into the ground as early as four to six weeks before the last frost.

Other early season vegetables like carrots, beets, radishes and Swiss chard can be planted about four weeks before the last frost. Tomatoes, corn, beans and summer squash will do fine as long as you wait until the date of the last frost. Finally, about two weeks after the last frost date is the best time to plant peppers, eggplants, cucumbers and winter squash.

For late season vegetables, you can plant these fall varieties: Swiss chard, corn, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplants and beans. You'll be eating fresh all the way up until first frost in the fall.

The easiest course for beginning gardeners is to stick with the normal growing season. Easy varieties grown in the middle of the growing season will keep things simple and uncomplicated when you're just starting out.

By the way, make sure your choices are well-suited to your area. North America has been divided into a handy set of growing zones by the USDA that will help you pick the right vegetable varieties. Check the chart before you plant.

Finally, plant with your local lighting conditions in mind. Will your raised bed garden be located in the shade or under full sun. If you've already chosen the location, you'll have to adjust your vegetable picks. Otherwise, flexibility of location is another great advantage of raised bed gardening.

About the Author

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