

Soil Prep 101

TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR RAISED BED GARDEN SOIL

Wondering how often, or even better yet, how do you improve the soil in raised beds? Raised beds are like large containers. If you deplete the soil nutrients over the course of one or more gardening seasons, you need to rebuild it. Sure, organic fertilizers are great to add in the spring. But, they are not the complete answer in improving your soil quality. By properly maintaining your soil in the raised beds, you won't need to replace it every few years. In fact, unless your plants bring in a soil-borne disease, you don't need to replace your raised bed soil at all -- just continue to maintain it!

1. Add Compost

Compost adds much needed organic matter. The single best thing you can do for your soil is to consistently add organic matter. This will enrich the soil and help you grow better plants. Add at least 6-12 inches to your existing soil and work it in 12-18 inches.

Suggested products include: Acidified Composted Cotton Burr, Sheep & Peat, Cow & Compost, and Soil Pep

2. Use Soil Amendments

Soil amendments are mixed with soil to improve soil quality. Using soil amendments increase the soil's nutrients or change the soil's physical structure. Remember that adding organic matter is the single most important thing you can do. Not only does it improve your soil structure, it adds organic matter that decays.

Suggested products include: My favorite soil amendment is Happy Frog. It provides, organic matter, nutrients, and is rich in microbial life. Kelp meal, worm castings, compost, dry molasses, bone meal, alfalfa meal, grass clippings, straw and can all be added.

(adapted from <http://www.cleanairgardening.com/5-tips-for-improving-your-raised-bed-garden-soil-2/>)

Rules of Thumb for Existing Beds that are Empty:

1. Add 6-12 inches of compost and turn it into the bed.
2. Work the soil when it is moist, but not wet.
3. Turn the soil over to a depth of at least 12 inches.

Cold Season Seeding – Hardy and Semi-Hardy Plants

FOR SPRING AND FALL: Plant the **hardy** and **semi-hardy vegetables** below in early spring for spring harvests and again in late summer for fall harvests.

Hardy vegetables tolerate hard frosts (usually 25 to 28 degrees F). They are good for spring and fall gardens. The hardiest—kale, spinach, and collards—can tolerate temperatures in the low 20s and high teens. All taste best when they mature in cool weather, so they are very well suited to late summer planting for fall harvests. Many of these hardy vegetables will continue in the garden for weeks after the first hard frost.

- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Collards*
- English peas
- Kale
- Kohlrabi
- Leeks
- Mustard greens
- Parsley
- Radish
- Spinach
- Turnip

Semi-hardy vegetables tolerate light frosts (usually 29 to 32 degrees F) late into fall and through winter in mild climates. They are good for spring and fall gardens.

- Beets
- Carrot
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Chinese cabbage
- Endive
- Irish potatoes
- Lettuce and gourmet salad greens
- Radicchio
- Rutabaga
- Salsify
- Swiss chard*

*Swiss chard and collards taste best in the cool of spring and fall, but will hang on during summer heat, too.

(adapted from <https://bonnieplants.com/library/which-veggies-for-which-season/>)