Raised Garden Boxes & High Density Gardening

Advantages

1. 6 times the yield of a conventional garden in the same space due to ‘high density’ gardening and better soil conditions
2. water 4-5 times less than conventional gardening due to the dense foliage cutting down on evaporation and also the water retention of the perilite
3. 80-90% fewer weeds
4. weeds easier to pull out (and unfortunately vegetable plants too)
5. ideal for small or limited spaces for gardens
6. no need to fertilize
7. no soil needed (you will make your own)
8. no soil compaction from stepping in garden space

When deciding to build raised garden boxes:

1. never build more than you have the ability to maintain
2. build your boxes no further across than 4’, this will allow you to reach in from either side plant, weed, and harvest
3. how ever long you make your boxes depends on how far you want to walk all the way around your boxes to get to the other side, I personally have found 10-12’ is what works for me
4. never build boxes to accommodate specialized fruits or vegetables
5. figure out what you want to plant in your boxes even if it is just a mixture of many vegetables the first year and then each year build on or more boxes to suit your ability to maintain them, needs and money available
6. 95% of most garden vegetables only grow in the top 4” of soil, so unless you are growing lots a carrots or parsnips you don’t need 12” deep boxes, using 2x6 lumber is usually good enough
7. I personally use 2x12 only because I like the look of them
8. when choosing lumber you don’t have to have brand new nice boards, remember they are going to be mostly in contact with dirt all the time, I personally use treated lumber which lasts longer
9. my current boxes are 17, 15, 12 and 12 years old respectively and are still good for another 10 plus years
10. many people say don’t use treated lumber because it has arsenic in it, that is not true, they stopped treating lumber with arsenic back in the 70s, now they use copper which is actually good for keeping many garden pests away from your garden
11. the deeper they are the more fill you need to buy
12. of the three main ingredients (compost, vermiculite, and peat moss) compost is usually the cheapest to use a fill
13. remember you are building on top of existing soil usually because the existing soil is not contusive to growing good crops, so, don’t use existing soil as filler
14. before adding filler or mixture to the box lay down a very thick layer of newspaper or similar type groundcover, then add soil on top of it, this will act as a weed barrier until it composts down, do not use fabric weed barrier
15. the three main ingredients compost, vermiculite, and peat moss will need to be mixed inside the box in equal proportions
16. if you are using taller boxes like I do put a filler material like compost in the bottom 8” of the box and then mix in equal proportions the top 4” of the three main ingredients
17. in the areas you want to grow carrots and parsnips longer than 4” I suggest filling that area with mixed ingredients all the way to the bottom of the box
18. technically with the three main ingredients listed above you should never have to fertilize, the equal parts of compost and peat moss is your natural fertilizer
19. do not put conventional gardening items into your boxes like manure, lime, etc.
20. now, for normal squarefoot gardening you would take string, wire, or some other marking items and section you garden boxes of into 12” squares, personally I have found this tedious and not very productive, I personally use 24” squares
21. okay, now that you have your boxes, built, filled, and sectioned off it is time to figure out what to plant in them
22. remember the sun rises in the east and setting in the west and mostly on the southern part of your garden, so plant you tallest growing items, like corn, to the north and shorter ones, like radishes, on the south end
23. the next thing about this method of gardening is that it allows you to do “high density” gardening which mean putting plants a lot closer together for example: normally you would plant bean and pea seeds every 4” apart in rows that are 12-18” apart
24. with high density gardening, plant your seeds or seedlings much closer together for example: beans and peas can be planted 2” apart in rows that are 5-6” apart and however long your sectioned off part of the boxes you are planting in

