

Building Raised Beds

These instructions demonstrate how to build a 2-layer, 8 x 4 foot raised bed, using:

- 4 x 2.4m railway sleepers
- 4 x 1.2m railway sleepers
- 16 x 150mm sleeper screws
- 8 x 250mm sleeper screws
- 1 x hex driver bit
- Weed control fabric
- Compost/growing media

1. Choose the right timber sleepers for your raised garden bed



There are various types of railway sleepers and each have their own set of characteristics, making them ideal for different jobs and garden aesthetics. When building a raised bed, we would recommend new sleepers over reclaimed sleepers, as these not only blend well into most garden designs, but they are also easier to cut, stack and secure. If a rustic look is preferred, our charred brushwood sleepers are a great option.

2. Choose the size and position of your raised bed



Depending on the size of your garden or allotment and what you are looking to grow, will depend on the size and position of your raised bed. If you are building more than one raised bed, it is important to consider your access requirements between the beds, such as making them wide enough to wheel a barrow or accommodate special needs such as wheelchairs. As a general rule, 30cm (1ft) is the minimum width suitable for walking and 45cm (18in) is the minimum width for wheelbarrows.

3. Lay the sleepers on the ground and fasten them together



To begin constructing your raised bed, lay 2 x 1.2m sleepers and 2 x 2.4m sleepers on a level section of ground in a rectangular shape, with the narrowest sides on the ground and facing upwards. Many people lay sleepers down directly on the earth, grass or concrete, however, some landscapers will consider a foundation of concrete or hardcore. Next, use two 150mm timber screws at each corner to attach the sleepers together. 50mm of the length of the screw needs to drill into the adjoining sleeper to create a solid connection.

4. Add another layer to the raised bed



Now you have secured your first layer, it is time to add a second layer so that the raised bed is deeper from the ground. Some people may choose to stop at one layer, however, a 2-layer raised bed is often the preferred choice. To create the second layer, we recommend individually laying each of the sleepers on top of the box you have created, overlapping the joins as if you are bricklaying. Create one corner and screw these together before adding the remaining sleepers to create the same rectangular shape.

Next, attach the layers together using 250mm timber screws, drilling down from the top to secure the two layers together.

5. Attach a plastic membrane to the raised bed



Some gardeners and landscapers choose to fix a plastic membrane on the inside of the raised bed, to create a barrier between the wet soil and the railway sleeper. If you are positioning the raised bed directly to the ground, we recommend using weed control fabric to suppress weed growth without the need for harsh chemicals.

6. Fill your raised bed with soil and add your choice of plants



Before you fill your raised bed with compost, topsoil or manure, it is worth considering placing cobbles or hardcore at the bottom of the bed to improve drainage. One of the many benefits in using raised beds is that you can fill them with the soil that best matches your planting. By filling raised beds with ericaceous compost, for example, lime-hating plants can be grown even where the underlying soil is alkaline. We supply a wide range of compost and growing media, in both standard bags and 800kg bulk bags.

Ready to create?

Take a look at our raised bed kit (SKU: 877852). This the perfect bundle, with everything you'll need to build your own raised beds.

