

Garden Section



Conservation office giving away seeds and plans to build raised bed

The Cheyenne County Conservation District is pleased to sponsor the Cheyenne County Home Garden Program to assist county residents in establishing their own small home gardens. Applicants will be provided with plans to build a 4'x8' raised bed and ten packets of seeds to grow in their garden.

The objective of the program is to encourage people to grow some of their own fresh produce. By

growing their own produce instead of buying produce that has been shipped in to town, applicants will be helping to conserve energy by reducing fuel use. Additionally, home gardeners have been shown to use water, nutrients, and pesticides more efficiently than large truck farms.

Tending your own garden can be a relaxing and rewarding venture. Participants will also be required

to share some of their harvest by bringing it into the Conservation Office where it will be weighed and donated to the local food pantry. A prize will be awarded to the participant who donates the most produce at the end of the season.

For an application, please stop into the conservation office or go to our website at www.cheyennecountycd.com. Seeds will be available on a first come, first served basis.

SKILLS & ABILITIES

Build a Raised Bed

When it came time to build new raised beds for the Organic Gardening Test Garden last spring, the executive director of the Rodale Institute, where our test garden is located, recommended a simple design. Mark Smallwood—"Coach," as he's known around the Institute—showed us how to build a raised bed using four pieces of untreated framing lumber, with not a scrap of waste. Each bed requires:

- Three 2-by-12 boards, 8 feet long
- One 2-by-4 board, 8 feet long
- 2½-inch galvanized deck screws (approximately 28 screws)

When purchasing lumber, inspect it for straightness. Straighter boards will result in tighter corners. Cut one of the 2-by-12 boards in half to make two 4-foot lengths; these will be the two end pieces.

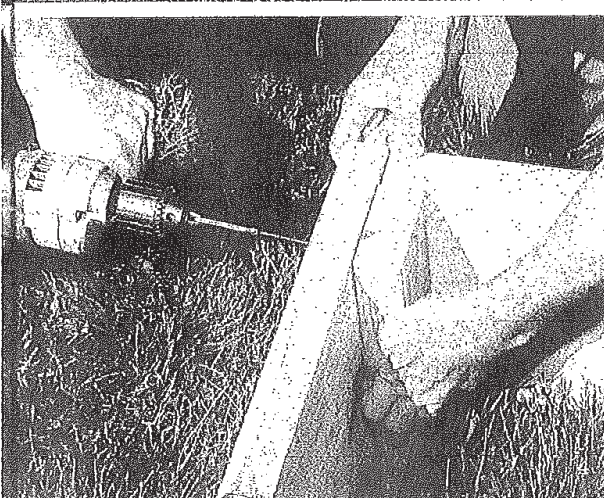
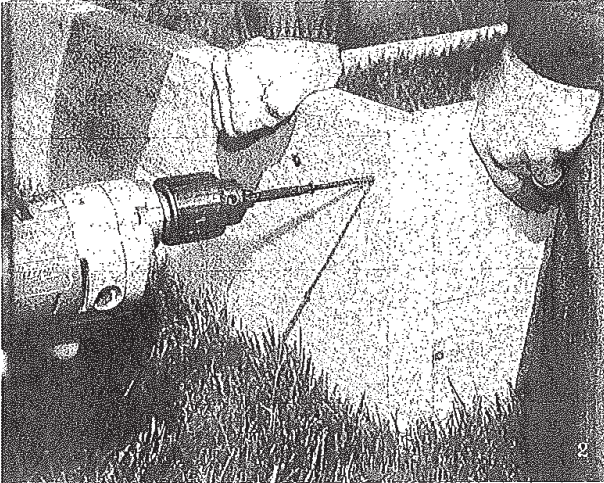
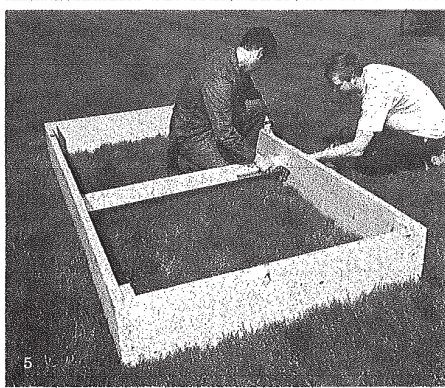
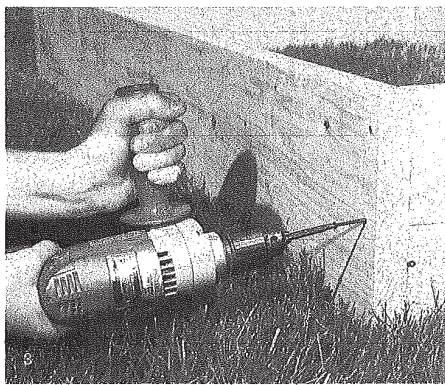
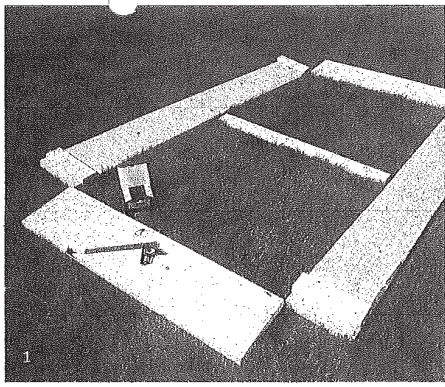
Cut the 2-by-4 board into one 4-foot length, to serve as a center brace, and four 1-foot lengths for corner supports. The two uncut boards will become the sides of the raised bed (1).

After drilling pilot holes, attach one of the side boards to an end board with three evenly spaced screws (2, 3).

Place one of the corner supports in the angle between the boards and attach it to the side board with three screws (4). Repeat for the remaining three corners.

Attach the center brace to join the two sides at their midpoints. Use a square to position the brace at a right angle to the sides (5). The brace prevents the sides from bowing outward when the bed is filled with soil.

The finished bed measures 4 feet by 8 feet—a size that makes seed sowing, weeding, and harvesting easy—and raises the planting level by almost a foot (6). The wood can be stained, if desired. We liked Coach's raised beds so much, we built 10 of them for the garden. —Doug Hall



People's garden initiative project

The People's Garden Initiative is a nation-wide effort which was started by the United States Department of Agriculture in 2009. Initially, it was to challenge all employees to start People's Gardens at the Department of Agriculture facilities or help communities create gardens through collaborative efforts.

Today, people across the nation are urged to join the movement. People's Gardens bring together people - young, old and from all ethnicities and all walks of life - who seek ways, big and small, to improve their community and the environment.

The initiative started when Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack declared the grounds surrounding the headquarters in Washington, D.C., the first People's garden on Feb. 12, 2009, in honor of Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday.

President Lincoln founded the United States Department of Agriculture in 1862, calling it the People's Department. The department continues to honor his vision for the department that serves the American people every day.

People's Gardens vary in size and type, but all are required to have three components in common.

- The must benefit the community, in some cases by creating recreational spaces and in others by providing a harvest for a local food bank or shelter.
- They must be collaborative - that is, the garden must be created and maintained by a partnership of local individuals, groups or organizations.
- Third, they must incorporate sustainable practices. The gardens might use compost or mulch made by participants. They might contain native plants or encourage beneficial insects. They also might exemplify water conservation, for instance, capturing rain in a barrel to water the garden.

Why Garden in Raised Beds?

- The soil can be liberally supplemented with compost and other organic amendments, creating a rich and porous root zone that nurtures plants.
- The bed sides act as an edging, helping to keep out weeds and turfgrass.
- Many gardeners, including those of restricted mobility, find that the slightly higher soil level facilitates maintenance.
- The elevated soil of raised beds drains quickly and doesn't become waterlogged, and it warms up earlier in spring. (Although those two characteristics are beneficial in cool, rainy climates, gardeners in hot, dry regions may consider them to be negatives.)



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