



## American Horticultural Therapy Association

### A GARDEN ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Individuals with mobility or physical limitations, including older adults, may find gardening difficult. Various accessible gardening techniques and tools can make gardening easier and more comfortable for a lifetime.

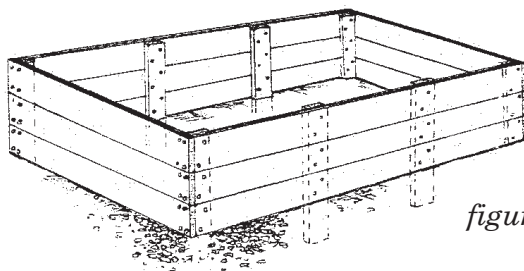
*An accessible garden may have one or more of the following features:*

- Raised beds allow an individual to garden from a seated position.
- Tabletop beds allow an individual in a wheelchair to roll right up to and underneath a table for easy access
- Container plants on pulleys may be lowered to a comfortable height for watering
- Adaptive tools with soft, large handles that increase leverage will lessen strain
- Greenhouses with wide, paved pathways allow gardening year-round for those using a wheelchair

### CONSTRUCTING A RAISED BED

#### *Site Selection*

A basic wooden raised bed is easily constructed, plus the size and shape can be customized to fit any location. Since the bed is above ground, the condition of the soil is not that important. However, the surface surrounding the bed should be level and accessible for those who will use it. Consider the site and the abilities of the gardeners. For example, grass, although attractive and level, may not be an accessible surface for a gardener who uses a wheelchair. A raised bed can be placed on concrete. Not only is it weed-free and wheelchair accessible, but the bed could brighten up a stark patio or sidewalk.



*figure 1.*

#### *Construction*

Instructions are for an open box, approximately two feet high by four feet wide by the length desired. In choosing the length, consider that lumber comes in standard lengths of 8, 10, or 12 feet. A maximum width of four feet is recommended so that from a seated position, such as a wheelchair, the center of the bed is within easy reach.

*(over)*

### *Instructions*

1. Using 2" x 8" boards, lay out the bottom layer of boards in a rectangular box-shaped frame.
2. Attach the corners with two screws (use 2 1/2" drywall screws or 3" deck screws) at each corner.
3. Make two more box-shaped frames the same way.
4. Stack the three frames to make a 22 1/2" tall bed.
5. Secure 2" x 4" braces in each corner with screws to tie the three frames together. Both sides of the frame should be securely attached to the corner braces to withstand the outward pressure of wet soil over time. Add an extra row of screws at each corner to secure the end pieces to the braces. See figure 1.
6. For sides longer than four feet, attach a 2" x 4" to the inside with screws for every three feet in length.
7. If the bed is not on a hard surface, make the 2" x 4" longer, and stake it into the ground before attaching, to keep the sides from bowing out.

### *Soil*

Once the bed is constructed, the bottom third of the box can be filled with crushed rock or gravel to allow for good drainage, and reduce the amount of soil needed. Fill the bed with soil or other planting medium, adding enough to allow for settling. Use a planter mix or make your own mix with two parts garden soil and one part compost.

### *Materials*

Use naturally rot-resistant wood such as redwood, or pressure-treated pine. For food production, treated wood of any kind can be dangerous and is not recommended. To help extend the life of the wooden raised bed, line it with a thick plastic. There are also raised bed kits on the market; they can be found at home improvement stores and garden centers.

### ***About the American Horticultural Therapy Association***

*The American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded in 1973, is the only organization in the U.S. actively promoting the benefits of gardening as a therapeutic intervention. AHTA's mission is to provide people with special needs greater access to horticultural therapy (HT) programming. People with special needs, including the elderly, the disabled and those with mental, physical and cognitive impairments, find comfort, strength, hope and community in sowing seeds, nurturing plants and sharing their success. For more information, visit us online at [www.ahta.org](http://www.ahta.org)*



**AHTA**