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(EXCEPT WHERE NOTED)



All-in-One *Vegetable* Garden

This ready-made kit makes it oh-so-easy to grow your own produce. And it can be up and running in about half a day!



Whether you're a gourmet cook, health-food fanatic, or harried mother of four trying to lower the grocery bill while putting something nutritious on the table, homegrown vegetables make more sense than ever. It's like having your cake and eating it too—only this “cake” is a priceless cornucopia of tasty produce.

If you're blessed with good soil, you can grow your vegetables directly in the ground. One exception: poorly drained soil. Another: a site near a black walnut tree (*Juglans nigra*), which exudes a substance impeding the growth of some plants. Planting in a raised bed solves both problems.

Many gardeners prefer planting in raised beds for other reasons, chief among them the ability to create a custom soil mix suited to their crops. Raised beds also warm up faster in spring—so impatient gardeners can start their season earlier—and they help thwart weeds and varmints.

The vegetable garden kit featured here is handsome enough that you



OPPOSITE: This attractive raised bed solved several problems at once, including a slight slope, proximity of black walnut trees, and marauding critters. **LEFT AND ABOVE:** There's room for tomatoes, peppers, basil, and other kitchen garden staples.

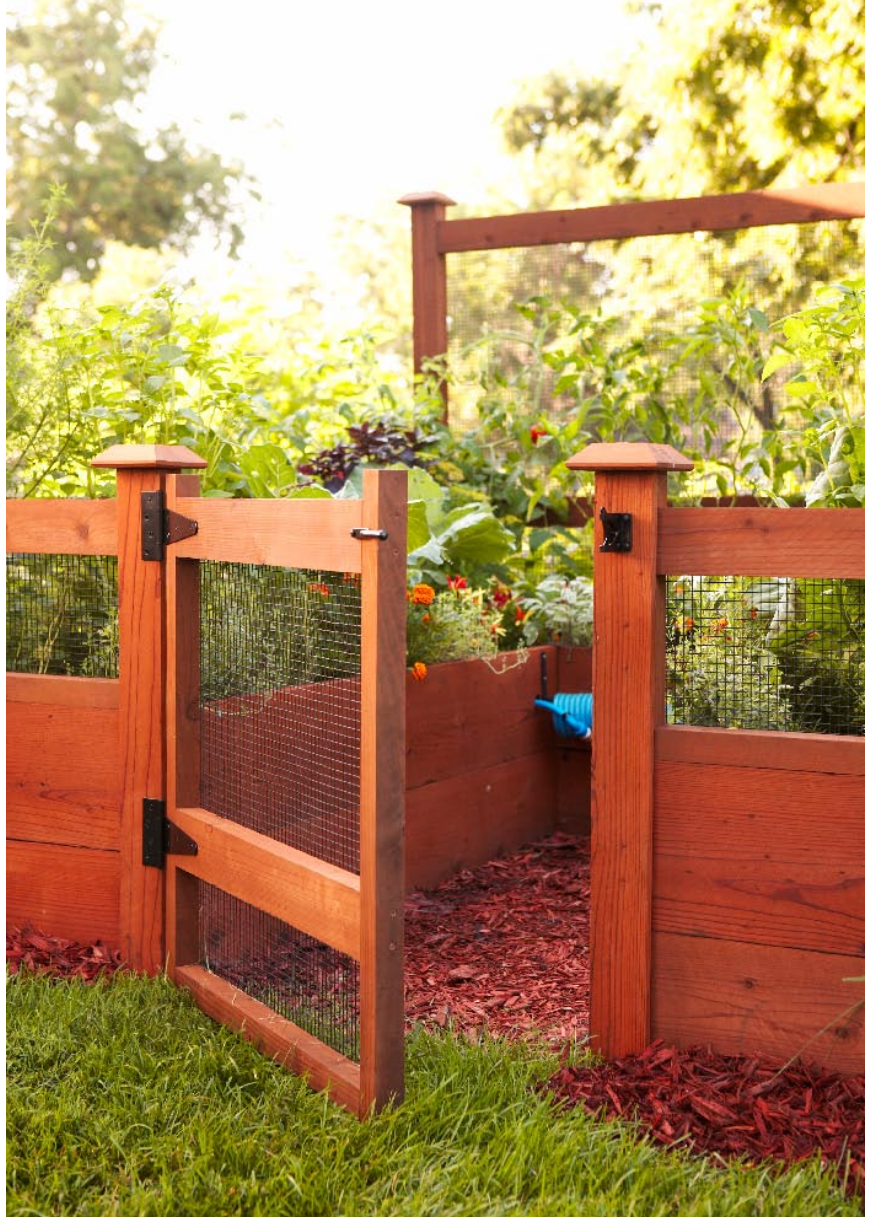
BENEFITS OF HOMEGROWN

A big incentive for growing your own food is saving money. A recent study by Burpee Seed Co. estimates that gardeners can harvest \$1,250 worth of produce for an investment of \$50 in seed and fertilizer. Other reasons:

- Fresh vegetables are tastier and often have more minerals than those sold in stores.
- You can try unusual and heirloom varieties that are impossible to find at the supermarket.
- There's no worry about the latest round of salmonella reported on TV.
- It eliminates the guilt of knowing that lettuce and onions came 3,000 miles by truck just to top your hamburger.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Ornamental peppers, dill, and purple-leaf basil grow happily in the custom soil mix. **OPPOSITE:** Optimum growing conditions in a raised bed mean you can grow a larger number of plants than you could in the same amount of ground space.



won't want to hide it in the backyard. And it's adaptable. Note the bunny-proof gate and the built-in trellis for vining plants. Then consider how the 20-inch-tall beds will cut down on bending. For the time-pressed, there's even a labor-saving automatic irrigation system, complete with soaker hose.

We found that the kit went together quickly and easily (it took us well under a day, and we paused for pictures). And with a number of available sizes (4x4 feet, 8x8 feet, 6x12 feet, 8x12 feet), materials (cedar, redwood, plastic) and prices (\$499-\$3,100), there are plenty of options.

Follow along as we show how to assemble and plant an all-in-one vegetable garden that will get you on the road to growing a bounty of healthful produce for the kitchen table.





BEFORE

GETTING STARTED

This raised bed vegetable garden kit goes together in just a few hours. Line up a helping pair of hands to hold things together during assembly, and you're ready to go.



Step 1: Place the unit in a sunny spot, preferably on flat ground. Check baseboard placement with a level. Use timbers to adjust for any slope.



Step 2: Prepare the base. After anchoring timbers with metal rods, backfill to create a flat base for the unit. Tamp soil firm. (Note: timbers do not come with kit.)



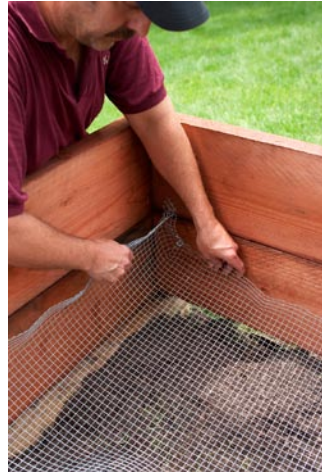
Step 3: Use a power drill to connect baseboards to the metal corner joints.



Step 4: Once all baseboards are secured, set secondary boards in place and attach with the wood screws provided.



Step 5: Attach the optional trellis using a power screwdriver. An extra pair of hands is helpful to hold the trellis during assembly.



Step 6: Line the bed with the screen provided. Peg tightly to discourage tunneling varmints. Optional: Add 4–5 inches of dead leaves and grass clippings.



Step 7: Fill the bed with soil. We used equal parts garden soil, compost, potting mix, and composted cow manure from Fafard (fafard.com).



Step 8: Smooth soil, pack lightly, then plant your choice of vegetables and herbs. Place tallest plants by the trellis and in corners.

Photographer: this page, Kritsada Panichgul.

WIN
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