



How to Make a Gopher/Mole/Vole Proof Raised Bed



1. Choose the site where you want your raised bed to be located. The site should have at least 6 hours of sunlight. Measure the area where the bed will be and mark it with stakes. The bed can be as long as you want, but make sure not to make it too wide. It shouldn't be more than 4 feet, which is just wide enough to reach into the middle without difficulty. You never want to have to step into the bed. The bed we are making her is going to be 7 ft. X 4 ft.



2. Next, gather the materials for the bed. We are using:
- 6x6 redwood/rot resistant lumber
- 24 inch X 5/8 inch steel stakes to hold the bed into place
- Galvanized steel 1/2 inch hardware cloth to line the bottom of the bed. You can buy hardware cloth in 3 ft. wide rolls. Do not use "chicken or gopher" wire – it will not work.
- Heavy duty staples to fasten the hardware cloth to the sides of the bed
Tools needed: a shovel, drill, mallet, and wire cutters.



3. Set the lumber on level ground matching up the corners to make the border of the bed. Drill the holes all the way through the lumber to set the steel posts all the way through. The stakes will secure the lumber to the ground. With the mallet, pound the stakes through the wood and into the ground until the top of the post is flush with the wood.



4. Now that the lumber is in place, remove soil to a depth of at least 18 inches so we can line the bed with galvanized hardware cloth. The hardware cloth needs to be set deep enough to be able to dig in the bed without damaging it. The hardware cloth will prevent critters from entering the bed and eating the plants.



5. You will need to buy 2 lengths of hardware cloth so they can be joined in the center to form one large sheet to stretch from the bottom of the bed up the sides. The length of the hardware cloth needs to include enough to total the full length of the bed and up the sides. Overlap the 2 pieces by a few inches in the center, then sew the strips together to make a secure seam (use thin, flexible wire such as fence wire to make a tight seam) After cutting the hardware cloth to the correct size, we place it into the bottom of the bed and form it to the sides. The hardware cloth needs to reach from the bottom of the bed up to the lumber so that it can be fastened.

Once the hardware cloth is in place, fasten it to the lumber with heavy duty staples every 3 inches. This will prevent hardware cloth from moving and creating gaps. If the hardware cloth is too shallow to reach up the sides because your bed is deep, cut extra strips that overlap at least several inches and “sew” up a seam with thin flexible wire so critters can’t slip between the pieces.



6. Now the hardware cloth is fastened, and the bed is ready to be refilled with the soil that we had previously taken out. When refilling the bed with soil, take this opportunity to amend it with compost at the same time.

7. The new bed is ready to plant. The lumber that we used is thick enough that it will last for many years without decomposing. It is protected underneath with hardware cloth so the gophers/moles/voles will not invade. We have added compost to enrich the soil for the plants. While it is true that an occasional invader may jump into the bed from the outside, it is easy to trap them as they have no way to escape!



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