

# A Useful Raised Bed

By Charles R. Andrews III—Cumming, Georgia

One of the best things I ever did relative to our garden is to build several raised beds. These beds serve many uses. Primarily, I use them to hold over plants with weak root systems. They also serve as small vegetable gardens.

There are times when I end up with plants that are not very healthy. The roots may be badly pot-bound, the most recent growth may be spindly, or the plants may just be small and immature. Instead of immediately placing them somewhere in the garden where they may not get needed attention, I take them to my raised bed, filled only with fine pine bark mulch. Here the plants reside for a year under drip irrigation and a little fertilizer, developing a vigorous root system. In one year's time, it is incredible how roots grow in the moist, well-drained pine bark environment. The following fall, with a pitchfork, I lift any rejuvenated plant out of its pine bark bed and plant it in its permanent home, a large hole, well mixed with fine pine bark.

This also works for mature plants that have been dug and have lost most of their roots in the process. Holding such plants over for a year in the raised bed makes them much healthier plants.

When not temporarily holding landscape plants, the beds are great places to grow tomatoes, lettuce, bok choy, garlic, and other tasty vegetables.

The beds are simple but attractive. The sides are treated 2" x 12" boards, with 2" x 4" studs bracing them every



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▲ Hurricane Creek native azaleas in raised bed.



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▲ Watering is essential. Shown here hose and connection with native azalea seedlings.

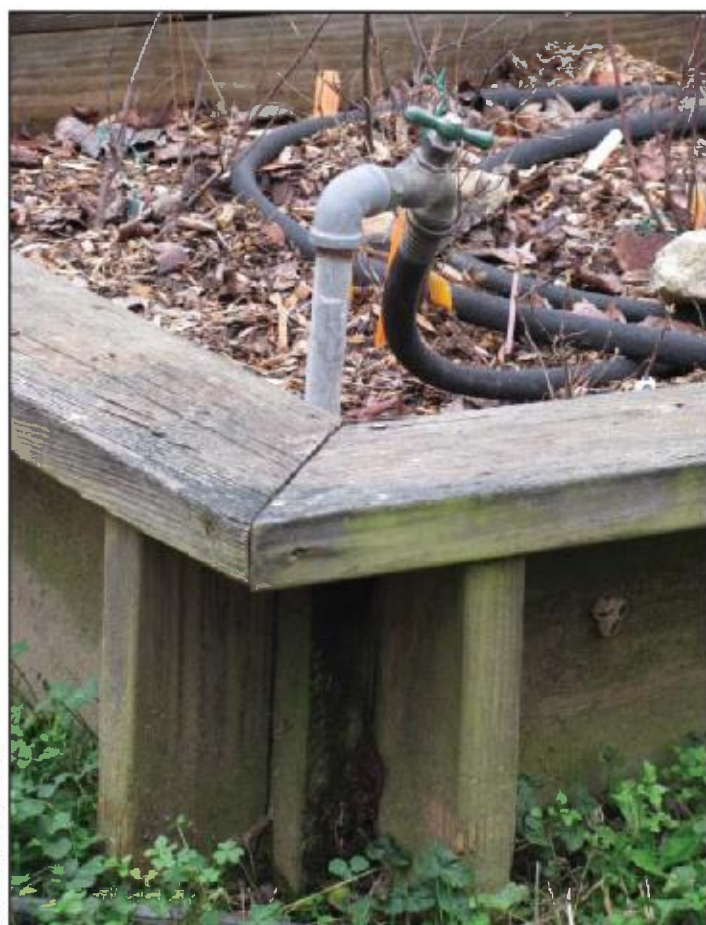


Photo Charles Andrews

▲ Detail of watering connection in raised bed.

▼ "New style" raised bed with watering system and native azalea seedlings, but without wasps.



Photo Charles Andrews

2' to 3' along the outside. The 2x4 braces are 14" in length, about 2" longer than the height of the side boards. The extra 2" go into the ground and hold the bed frame in place. On the top edge of the boards and covering the supporting 2x4s, I placed 2" x 6" boards horizontally around the frame. This makes a comfortable seat to sit on while working in the bed. The width and length can be anything to fit the situation. My beds are 4' wide, allowing easy access to the center of the bed from either side. As mentioned earlier, the beds are then filled with pure pine bark mulch, the small stuff, dime-sized and smaller. Access to water is essential, and a soaker hose is the main accessory.

A modification I made with my second set of raised beds is to place the vertical 2x4 supports on the inside of the 2" x 12" frame and then cover the inside supports with a 1" x 6" skirt. The reason: wasps. I found wasps would build nests under the seat. Allowing no area under the seat for wasps to build nests has made my life much happier.

Add a raised bed to your garden. You will be glad you did.

Charles Andrews is a member of the Vaseyi Chapter of the Azalea Society of America, a member of the editorial review committee for The Azalean, and president of the Azalea Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.