



City of Boston
GrowBoston

Raised Bed Program Information Sheet & Resources

Program Overview

GrowBoston's Raised Bed Program builds raised beds for low-income Boston residents, non-profit organizations, and public facilities. The goals of this program are to make neighborhood food systems stronger, offer new local food sources for low-income households, build community through gardening, and help individuals and families to grow more food. Read more about the Raised Bed Program at boston.gov/departments/growboston/raised-bed-program.

What to Expect

You will receive between one to four garden beds (depending on how many you request). These beds are 4' wide x 8' long x 10" tall. Your garden bed will be filled with soil. See an example photo below. Note: we have a limited number of elevated beds for people with disabilities and elders. Please include this in your application if you are in need of an elevated bed.



Gardening support - If you are located in Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, or East Boston, you are eligible to receive free education support through our [Urban Agriculture Ambassador Program](#).



Building Process

Your bed will be built either by Green City Growers, The Food Project, The Urban Farming Institute, or YouthBuild. They will contact you to schedule an initial site visit. During this site visit, they will walk through a [checklist of questions](#) in order to identify the right location for your garden beds. Next, they will schedule an installation date. These organizations are building 475 raised beds for GrowBoston, so please be patient as you will most likely need to wait until 2026 to receive your bed.

Questions to Consider

1. **Do you have the right space?** It is important that you have a flat area that receives 6+ hours of sunlight. Ensure you have a water spigot nearby. Your garden bed can be built on any ground-level surface, including on grass or a paved surface, such as a driveway. However, it cannot be built on a roof deck or a raised porch with stairs. Your garden should be located in a space where people naturally spend time and will enjoy gardening.
2. **Who will care for the garden?** It can be challenging to identify who will maintain and engage with the garden. Involve as many different people as you can to ensure the garden doesn't become neglected if one or two staff members leave. Here are examples of different models to consider:
 - a. Staff ownership: staff create a maintenance plan involving multiple people to care for the garden and share the responsibility.
 - b. Community garden-style: set up garden beds to be "owned" by community members for one year at a time. Conduct a garden lottery to select recipients.
 - c. Volunteers: organize a volunteer group or other group of community volunteers to maintain the garden.
3. **How will you engage the community?** The purpose of these garden beds is to teach people how to grow food and to give community members an opportunity to try something new. Consider who your target audience is (youth, elders, teens, etc.) and how you can engage people through workshops, storytime in the garden, regular garden care, etc.
4. **Do you have a small budget for the garden?** Depending on the size of your garden, you should set aside \$100-\$500 each year for garden upkeep. This includes tools, seeds/seedlings, compost, etc.



5. **Where will you put your compost?** Each garden will have some amount of weeds and dead plant materials to compost. If you put them on the ground, it may attract rats. You can include compost with your yard waste to be picked up by the City.

Ongoing Maintenance

The gardening season is April - November and involves the following tasks:

- Planting seeds/seedlings in the spring (and throughout the season as you have space).
- Regular watering: this will occur on a daily basis after you have planted seeds and when plants are young. Watering can be less frequent after plants are established.
- Ongoing plant care: weeding, checking for pests and managing pests, pruning, and harvesting.
- Removing plants and shutting down the garden in the fall, including adding compost on a yearly basis.

Take a look at our [Gardening Tip Sheets](#) to learn more about gardening.

Resources

- Regional seed companies include: [Johnny's Seeds](#), [Fruition Seeds](#), [Truelove Seeds](#), [High Mowing](#). Check your local public library as many of them have free seeds to give away. Hardware stores often sell seeds too.
- Gardening materials & tools to get you started:
 - Gloves
 - Hand trowel
 - Hose
 - Watering cans
 - Gardening shears
 - Trellising materials: bamboo or metal with twine or hemp string
 - Pest sprays: organic insect soap, neem oil
 - Tomato cage

You can purchase local gardening supplies from Mahoney's Garden Center and Allandale Farm, as well as hardware stores.

Questions?

Please reach out to Emily at emily.reckardmota@boston.gov if you have any questions about this program or would like help brainstorming about how to get your garden started.

If you have one-off gardening questions, contact UMass Extension at greeninfo@umext.umass.edu.