

Starting a Spring Garden

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It's almost spring and that means that it's time to start planning out exactly what you would like to include in your garden.

I have grown flowers and vegetables many different ways, but the gardens I prefer to work with are raised beds. I also like potted gardens (You know, just planting vegetables and flowers in a variety of pots).

Both of these types of gardens keep critters from eating your plants. Gardening like this also prevents you from having to dig into concrete-like soil and increases your plants' drainage.

If you would like to try something out of the ordinary, make raised beds from hay bales, concrete block, old tires or untreated wood. Just make sure the beds are built up at least 12 to 18 inches off the surface of the soil.

Because of Arizona's intense sun and heat, carefully consider the location of your raised beds. Position the beds long ways along a north/south axis, and make sure the bed receives morning sun and afternoon shade.

Once you have built your beds, fill them with compost or a good type of planting type mix. Use a flat-nosed shovel to level and smooth out the bed. If you want to grow melons, cucumbers and squash, try installing a trellis on the north end of your beds. This will help save room in the rest of your garden.

After your beds have been leveled, install a sprinkler system. I find soaker hoses, bubblers and leaky pipes work best in raised beds. Avoid overhead shrub sprays -- they can create fungus problems on leaf surfaces. Also, try to avoid using drip systems in raised bed gardens -- they don't water the beds evenly.

In a few weeks I'll explain what you should plant in a spring garden. We'll have to wait until the weather warms up a bit for that, though.