

# BUILD A RETAINING WALL WITH A RAISED BED

**Skill Level:** INTERMEDIATE Give these projects a try if you're a confident DIYer with a good working knowledge of a variety of tools. They can take a day or more to complete. If you can build a birdhouse or install a ceiling fan, your skill level is probably appropriate.

## **MATERIALS**

- Stakes
- Nylon Mason's String
- Garden Hose
- Ground Marking Paint
- Tape Measure
- Wall Block
- Patio/Paver Base
- Leveling Sand
- Landscape Fabric
- 4" Perforated Drainage Pipe if needed
- Topsoil
- Wheelbarrow
- Plate Tamper
- Garden Rake
- 3" or 4" Chisel
- 3 lb. Mallet
- Rubber Mallet
- Construction Adhesive
- Caulk Gun
- Broom
- Shovel
- Carpenter's Level
- Chalk or Mason's Crayon
- Rented Masonry Wet Saw
- Safety Glasses
- Work Gloves
- Dust Mask
- Ear Protection

#### **IMPORTANT**

Follow the manufacturer's instructions when installing your retaining wall. And check your local building codes. Installing a retaining wall requires some lifting and cutting of stone. If you don't feel comfortable installing your retaining wall, contact a professional for help. And it's a good idea to have any utility lines marked before you dig. Dialing 811 will connect you to your local utility company who can mark these lines for you—free of charge.

Adding a retaining wall with a raised bed can open up new doors for your backyard. These pleasant focal points have a level planting bed so you can add colorful flowers and greenery to your landscape. Try this weekend project to boost the look of your backyard.

## PREPARING THE FOUNDATION

#### 01 Plot the bed.

- Use mason's string and stakes to initially mark the bed.
- For rectangular beds, make sure the area is square by measuring the diagonals. If they are equal, the bed is square.
- Move the stakes to make any necessary adjustments.
- Spray the lines with marking paint.
- Random curves
  - To make a random curve on the corner, lay a hose in the desired curve pattern.
  - Then cover the hose with sand.
  - Lift the hose and the sand will mark the curve.
- Radial curves
  - To make a uniform curve, tie a piece of string to a stake that is equal distance from the two adjacent edges.
  - Tie the other end of the string to your can of marking paint. You've just made a compass.
  - Spray from one edge to the other pivoting on the stake, forming a curve at the corner.

#### 02 Determine the supplies you'll need.

- Measure the square footage of the bed with a tape measure.
- Bring that number to Lowe's along with the intended height of your retaining wall. Ask a Lowe's associate about convenient delivery of all your materials.



## BUILD A RETAINING WALL WITH A RAISED BED

### PREPARING THE FOUNDATION (cont.)

- 03 Excavate the entire area 6" to 12" deep and about 4" wider than the perimeter of the blocks.
  - If the ground slopes, step the trench up or down to keep the base level.
  - Check it with a carpenter's level.
- **04** Compact the bottom of the trench with a plate tamper.
- 05 Lay down 3" to 6" of Patio/Paver base to give the wall stability.
  - The Patio/Paver base is ¾" and smaller gravel that compacts well.
- **06** Rake the gravel and check it again for level.
- 07 Compact it with the tamper.



## **BUILDING THE WALL**

- 01 Place the first block on the base.
  - For a rectangular bed, start on the corner.
  - For a circular bed, you can start anywhere.
  - For a bed against a wall, start at the wall.
  - If you're using flanged blocks, knock off the flange of the first row with a hammer and chisel.
- 02 Level the block with a carpenter's level.
- 03 Continue laying the first row, making any height adjustments with small amounts of sand and a rubber mallet.
  - Leveling of the first course of block is critical. If done correctly, the rest of the job will go quickly and easily.
- 04 If needed, cut the block for the curve in a pie shape.
  - Be sure to wear eye, ear, and dust protection.
  - Simply mark the blocks along the radius, and cut with the masonry saw.
- 05 You may need a partial block to complete the first row.
  - Mark a full block to the correct length.
  - Cut it with the masonry saw.
  - If you didn't cut a block to finish your first row, you'll need to cut one to start the second row to stagger the joints.





## BUILD A RETAINING WALL WITH A RAISED BED

#### **BUILDING THE WALL (cont.)**

- 06 Continue building the wall.
- 07 Add drainage pipes to walls 2' and over. This keeps water from building up behind the wall. (Skip this step if your wall is under 2'.)
  - When you have two rows complete, lay a 4" perforated drainpipe on the gravel behind the blocks.
  - Make sure that it is pitched to one side, about 1" for every 8'.
  - One end of the pipe should stay unobstructed so that the ground water can escape.
- **08** Backfill every two rows with gravel.
  - For a raised bed, build the last 12" without backfilling. This space is for topsoil.
- **O9** Before laying the last row of blocks in place, apply construction adhesive to the top of the last blocks.





12 Plant flowers and shrubs to finish the look.



These "How-To's" are provided for informational purposes only. The information contained in Lowe's "How-To" videos is intended to provide general guidance to simplify jobs around the house. Because tools, products, materials, techniques, building codes and local regulations are continually changing, Lowe's assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information contained herein and disclaims any liability for omissions, errors or the outcome of any project. It is the responsibility of the viewer to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, rules, codes and regulations for a project. The viewer must always take proper safety precautions and exercise caution when taking on any project. If there is any question or doubt in regards to any element of a project, please consult with a licensed professional.