



Simple raised bed vs in-ground checklist

1. Your soil and drainage

- My soil is heavy clay, rocky, or full of rubble → **Lean raised beds**
- Water sits in puddles after rain → **Lean raised beds**
- Soil is decent and drains within a few hours → **In-ground is fine**
- Yard is hot, dry, and windy most of the time → **Lean in-ground** (better moisture holding)

2. Budget and setup

- I want the lowest possible upfront cost → **In-ground**
- I can spend on lumber/metal and purchased soil → **Raised beds OK**
- I am okay doing more weeding to save money → **In-ground**
- I'd rather invest more now for fewer weeds → **Raised beds**

3. Time and watering

- I can water often or will install drip/soaker hoses → **Raised beds OK**
- I know I will forget if beds need water almost daily in summer → **Lean in-ground**

4. Your body and access

- Bending and kneeling are hard on my back/knees → **Raised beds (taller)**
- I can kneel and bend without much trouble → **In-ground OK**

5. Climate and crops

- Cool, damp springs; soil slow to warm → **Raised beds warm and drain faster**

- Hot, dry summers; water is precious → **In-ground holds moisture better**
- Mostly salad greens, herbs, compact veggies → **Raised beds shine**
- Bigger crops (corn, pumpkins) or large berry patches → **Often easier in-ground**

6. How long you'll use this spot

- Long-term garden in this location → **Either works; raised beds worth considering**
- Might move or change layout soon → **Start in-ground** (easier to alter later)

If you check more raised-bed answers, start with raised beds; if you check more in-ground answers, start in-ground and improve your soil with compost. Many gardeners eventually use **both**.