

# COMMENT

## Bending down ain't too bad - straightening up is the killer

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A Ted Bit

For the most part, I believe the older we get, the smarter we become.

(Of course, there is always the old saying, "There's no fool, like an old fool" but we'll leave that alone for now.)

Experience can be a ruthless teacher, and every year the calendar flips, I see how much I've learned.

Lately it's all about backs: my back, and bending over.

(The bending down part ain't too bad - it's just straightening back up that's the killer.)

I find myself subconsciously thinking about ways to do things without having to bend over. If I can find a way to work on something elevated to waist level, I won't work on it on the floor, or the ground.

If repairing a piece of machinery, I try to elevate it to a comfortable working level, using the front end loader, or some other means.

In short, I hate having to bend over.

A few months ago, I wrote about how The Sidekick was reading a book by Frankie Flowers, regarding planting a garden. One chapter was dedicated to raised gardens.

There were several suggestions, elevating it with various means - wood boxes, plastic commercial planters and a host of other ideas.

My problem was the fact they are still on the ground - about a foot high.

That still requires bending over.

People working in greenhouses don't bend over - the plants are at waist level.

So with that thought in mind, I started looking around the farm to see what I could utilize to make a real raised garden.

There were a couple old steel water troughs around - all had cracked seams in the metal so they're no longer useful as a water trough as they leak.

But they could still hold soil!

I moved one of these troughs behind the

house, and set it on a concrete platform that was once the old cistern for the house.

I dumped a load of composted sheep manure to the trough (with the front end loader; no bending!) and then a layer of top soil to finish it off.

The last addition was the rain barrel my daughter gave me for Father's Day. Voila, water on demand!

The trough, which is eight feet long, 30 inches across, and 24 inches high, is an additional 16 inches off the ground on the cistern cover, making it a perfect height to work on - standing up straight.

And with this dry summer, the trough has contained loads of moisture, making the plants thrive.

The garden is also right on the edge of my daily trek to the barn, so I water it as I go by, only taking minutes. And the plants aren't disturbed by rabbits because they can't climb the metal sides of the trough.

We now have tomatoes at eye level, and two cucumber plants that have crawled out over the side of the trough, down to the ground, and are now setting off across the yard in a southerly direction, chasing the early morning sunshine as it creeps over the horizon.

I'm quite impressed, to say the least. Gardening for me was always a nuisance, as I had to get down on the ground, and pull weeds. With it elevated, it's a piece of cake.

So Frankie was right: a raised garden makes things easier. A raised garden at waist level is a joy to maintain.

So listening to the old back has become a good thing here. Not only have I found a convenient way to have an effective garden, but I've made use of an old trough that would probably become scrap or landfill.

Now I'm eyeing the two other troughs back there for next year...

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