

File it!

MAKE A File Box Vegetable Garden

I've grown vegetable plants in plastic five-gallon buckets, but the roots weren't happy—they seemed to get too hot and bound up, the soil too compacted. This design allows you to use common garden soil, but the roots stay consistently moist without compaction.

1. You'll need:

- file box
- 2 bricks
- 15" piece of 2" PVC pipe
- square of 1/4" mesh hardware cloth, cut to fit the bottom of your box
- square of 2" x 4" hog wire fencing (twisted, not welded), cut to fit the bottom of your box

2. Drill or punch a 1/4" drain hole in the side of your box at exactly the height of your bricks.

3. Place the bricks in the box and prop the tube in one corner, making sure it reaches the bottom of the box but at a slight angle to allow for water to pass through.

4. Cut a small hole in one corner of the hardware cloth so that it fits around the pipe when you lay the cloth on top of the bricks.

5. Place the hog wire on top of the hardware cloth, fitting it around the pipe.

6. Get your little plant ready (this one is zucchini) and add soil to within 2" of the top of the box.

7. Tip: Discarded plastic food containers make great garden markers.

8. Water is added through the tube directly into the bottom of the box, so there's no soil compaction. Until the roots reach the water, the soil wicks it from the bottom and stays wet. You can fertilize the water by making a mild manure tea or by using liquid seaweed fertilizer. Water daily up to the level of the drain hole.

