

Terracing the Garden

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Image: *Newly terraced garden with supports for climbing beans in the top terrace.*

Coming from Prince Rupert, I've always been concerned about getting my garden to drain

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adequately. We used raised beds in our gardens there, largely to keep the beds from becoming bogs. I never thought you could have too much of a good thing when it came to drainage ...

I was wrong. Here, in Port Neville, our garden beds are on a relatively steep slope, and the soil is sandy. Water flows through, and over, the soil all too well. We get lots of rain in the winter, and not only does the rainwater wash away the fines in the beds, we get actual erosion channels forming. Too much drainage!

So another approach was needed. Not raised beds *per se*, but barriers to slow and stop water flow, providing time for the water to percolate slowly through the soil. What we devised was a system of terraces. This would not only slow water flow, but level the beds and make them easier to work.

Luckily, we had salvaged a large amount of 4" and 6" black poly pipe during the winter. This material served to form the edges of our beds. In a few places, we also used logs and cedar boards.



Image: *Terraced beds on the left side of the garden. Note the 6" black poly pipe forming the bed limits.*



Image: *Terraced beds on the right side of the garden. Netting is protecting young spinach plants from our “road chickens” (ruffed grouse). This bed has early season onions and garlic, as well as some overwintered kale which will be used for seed production.*



Image: *Terraced pea garden with supports for climbing pea plants. There are rows of fruit bushes on the right of the photo (early and late season raspberries, currants, and gooseberries).*



Image: *Terraced potato beds (foreground), with the greenhouse and terraced beds for corn, peanuts, and sunchokes in the background.*



Image: *Herb garden and perennial plants. This garden is the only one that we will not terrace, although we are working on a decorative drift-wood theme for edging.*

So far, the terraces have worked great! When water is added, the water stays in the beds, and soaks down, rather than flowing across the ground. This is a great improvement, especially for later in the summer when water is a precious resource and wastage is to be avoided.