

Building a Cold Frame

Extending your growing season



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Building a cold frame is a great way to extend your growing season. A cold frame allows you to start seeds earlier and keep things growing well into fall & winter. A cold frame can be built with easy to obtain materials, a little hard work, and time. But, it is well worth the effort. Pick a sunny spot in your garden where you will get lots of light (normally this will be a south-facing area) and follow the directions. No need to worry, this is EASY!

Getting Started

Materials

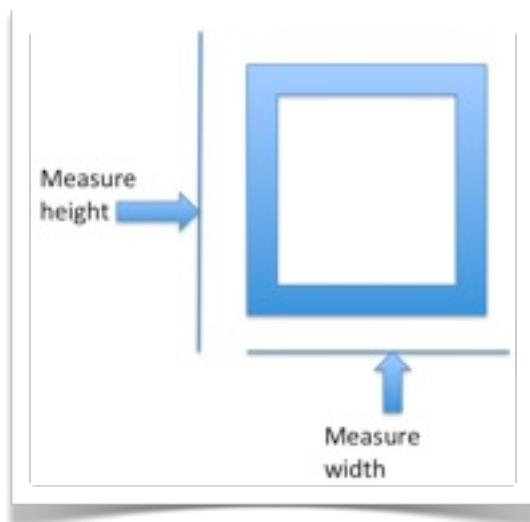
You will need to following (we will determine the exact amount of wood in the next section)

- Old Windows
- Pressure treated wood (2x8 or 2x10's)
- Nails
- Hinges with screws (two per window)
- Hammer
- Power Saw or Hand saw

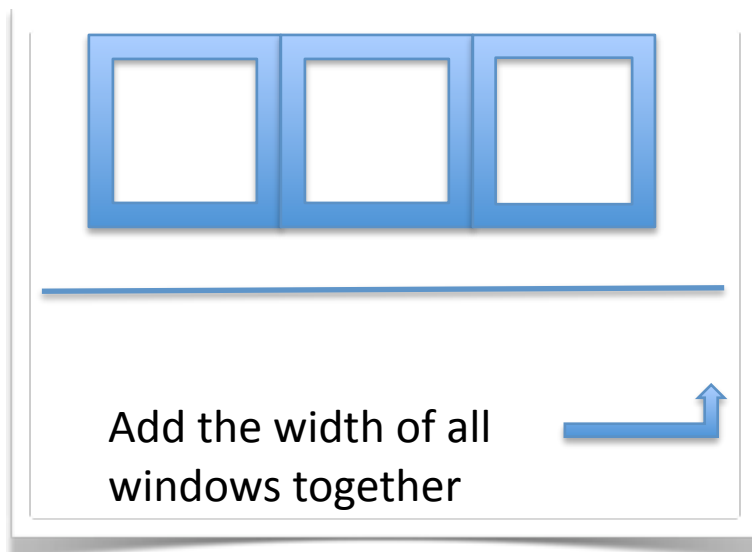


Determining the Amount of Wood Needed

To determine the amount of wood you will need, you need to measure your windows. You will need the length and width of each window. If you plan on using more then one window, measure all windows and add up the total width.



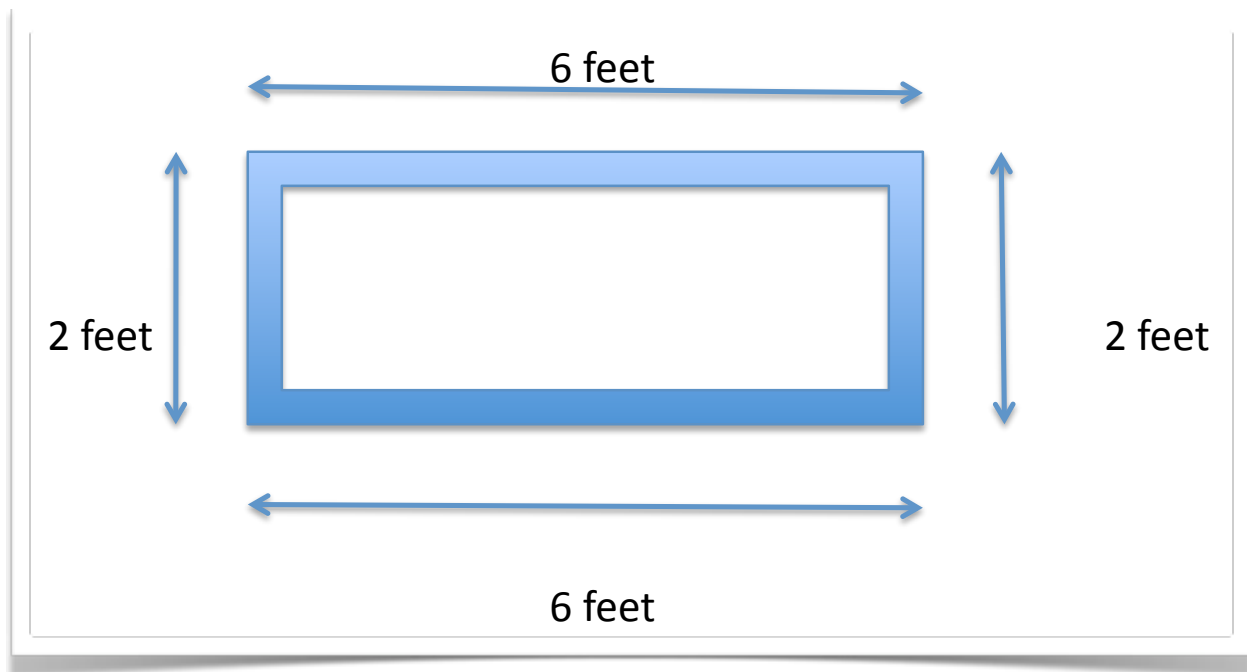
You can make your cold frame out of single windows or group several windows together for a larger cold frame.



The pictures in this material are from a cold frame made from 3 windows. Windows do need to be the same size if you decide to use multiple windows. Now that you have your height and width, you can calculate the amount of wood you will need. We are simply going to make a box that is the size of our windows. We want to build a box that is approximately 1-2 inches smaller than the over dimensions of our windows so rain can run off and allows for a bit of overhang.

First, determine the front and back wood needs using the width measurement. For example, if my windows are 24 inches wide and I am going to be using 3 of them, I multiple 24 by 3: $24 \times 3 = 72$ inches or 6 ft. Don't forget you are calculating for both front and back, so take the 6 ft and double it.

Next, determine the side needs: If my windows are 24 inches, I will need 24 inches of wood for each side. So, $24 \times 2 = 48$ or 4 ft.



If you are purchasing wood, you will most likely find wood in 8 foot pieces. That just means you will need to use your hand saw or power saw a bit. The back of your cold frame should be taller than the front. This allows for the windows to be on an angle for rain to run off.

In our example, here is what I would need to build the box:

4 of the 2 X 10 X 8 (that is wood that is 2 inches thick, by 10 inches wide, by 8 feet long)

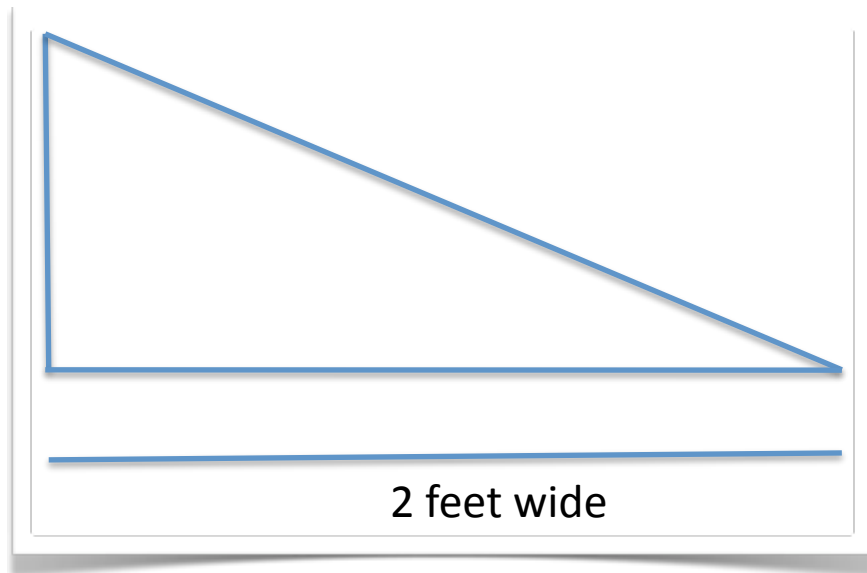
*** You could also use 2X8X8's but your cold frame would only be 8 inches high in the front.

Here is how I would cut my wood:

3 pieces 6 feet long

4 pieces 2 feet long

To make the final cuts, take 2 of the 2 foot long pieces and cut into an

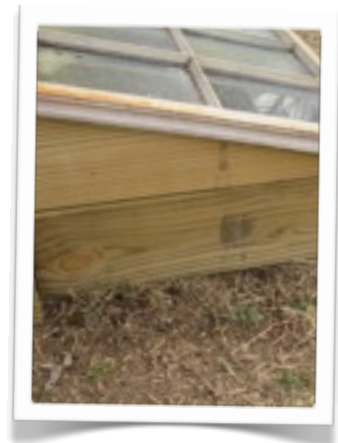


elongated triangle:

Putting the Frame Together:

Start with the back and nail it to the two side sections. Then nail the front to the sides. You will have a box. Using a few pieces of scrap wood, add an additional 6 foot section to the back. Finally, nail the 2 remaining two foot sections that you cut like triangles to the sides.

**It is easier to build your frame where you plan to place it rather than trying to move it later.



Assembling Your Cold Frame



Lay Windows on the Frame

Make sure they fit together tightly so there are not any gaps for cold air to enter. Windows should rest on the frame at both the top and bottom



Attach Hinges

Attach hinges to frame first then onto window. Make sure that your windows don't move around. Double check to make sure they are still snug.



Add a layer of compost

This should not be fully composted. As it continues to compost, it will heat the cold frame. 2-4 inches depending on the depth of your frame



Top with soil

Add soil (either fully composted or bagged soil from the garden center) Start planting!!

Tips for Using a Cold Frame

Take care of your plants

You will be amazed at how warm it will get in your cold frame even in the cooler fall and winter months. Be sure to water your plants and check on them often. Remember that your compost is still working and warming up the entire cold frame.

Vent when the weather is warmer

You can use a few pieces of wood to elevate your windows a bit when the weather starts to get warmer. Venting will allow you to keep the temperature regulated and keep your plants happy

Sources for materials

You do not have to spend a lot of money to make a cold frame. Old windows can be purchased at flea markets, be given to you when a neighbor puts in new windows, or be found at yard sales. The example in the pictures is made from 3 windows purchased at an antique warehouse for \$5.00 a piece.

You can use scrap wood from your garage or shed to build your frame. The most important thing is that it is pressure treated so that it doesn't decay or dry rot.

Hinges can also be re-claimed from other things such as old doors or also found at the flea market.

Questions? Let us know if something isn't
clear or if you have difficulty
understanding any of the steps. We will
be happy to answer them. Email us at:
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