

RailRoad Ties Assembly Instructions

Old railroad ties are used in landscaping to provide edging for flower beds or walkways or to construct small retaining walls, compost bins or raised beds while also bringing an attractive rustic element to a yard. In order to avoid potentially dangerous situations and maintain a neat and orderly appearance, it is necessary to secure old railroad ties or landscape timbers firmly in place. Burying the first row of ties and pounding ample steel spikes or lengths of rebar to hold levels of ties together effectively anchors the ties.

1. Excavate a trench to accommodate the bottom layer of railroad ties. Dig the trench deep enough to hold the first row of timbers, if multiple layers of railroad ties are planned. Dig a trench deep enough to accommodate between about a third to a half of the timber's height if laying just one row of ties.
2. Tamp the soil at the bottom of the trench to compact it.
3. Place the first layer of railroad ties in the prepared trench. Set a level on top of each tie and where two ties meet to make sure that the timbers are all even. Make corrections as needed by adding or removing soil from under the timbers.
4. Drill holes about a foot away from the ends into each railroad tie. Drill an additional hole or two in the center of each tie if it is longer than 4 feet.
5. Pound a 10- or 12-inch galvanized steel spike or 12-inch length of rebar through each hole.
6. Mark with chalk the position of each spike on the front of the timber where it will remain visible when the next layer of ties is placed.
7. Set the next course of railroad ties atop the first layer, staggering them so that the ends of the ties do not align between rows.
8. Drill holes through the top of the second course of timber, making sure that the holes are not in the same position as the spikes in the first row that are marked by the chalk. Again, space holes about a foot from each tie's ends.
9. Pound steel spikes or rebar through the prepared holes
10. Stack additional rows of railroad ties, drilling holes and pounding spikes through, until the desired height is reached.

Things You Will Need

- Work gloves
- Safety glasses
- Shovel
- Mattocks
- Soil tamper
- Railroad ties or timber
- Level
- Drill with 12-inch wood drill bit
- 10- or 12-inch galvanized steel spikes or sections of #3 rebar
- Sledgehammer
- Chalk

Tip

- For railroad tie retaining walls or taller raised beds, additional reinforcement in the form of vertically-oriented ties in the front of the wall at joints and corners or deadmen, anchors halfway up the wall that extend back from the wall and have another timber attached that is oriented parallel to the wall.