

Container Gardens

A Garden Guide

Whether you have acres or only a small patio, versatile container gardens can enhance your landscape and turn “blah” areas into “wow” areas. For centuries, plants have been grown in gourds, baskets, earthen vessels, or other types of containers. Our grandmothers were master recyclers with their worn out pots and pans, leaking dishpans, and empty cans turning them into container gardens. Only recently has modern technology made container gardening easier and more attractive with bagged potting soil, lightweight containers, and new varieties of dwarf and other “container-friendly” plants.



Anything may be used as a container as long as it provides ample room for root growth and has good drainage. Holes in the bottom or side rim are best. Terra cotta (clay) pots come in a wide range of sizes, styles, and designs, and plants grow very well in them. Hanging baskets, wall planters, window boxes, and trough gardens make interesting accents to your garden. If the appearance of the container is not too important, plastic nursery pots make inexpensive containers. Unsightly containers can always be wrapped for the season in burlap.

ANNUALS

Annuals are colorful, long flowering, and easy to grow and combine with other types of plants. It is good to combine some plants from each of these categories of shapes – **upright, mounding, and trailing.**

UPRIGHT ANNUALS

Canna
Celosia – tall

Dracaena spikes

Eucalyptus

House Plants-assorted

Marigolds – tall

Melampodium

Nicotiana

Ornamental Grass

Pentas – tall

Salvia – tall

Snapdragons – tall

MOUNDING ANNUALS

Ageratum

Begonia

Coleus

Cuphea

Dahlia

Dianthus

Dusty Miller

Geranium

Heliotrope

Impatiens

Marigold

Ornamental Kale/Cabbage

Pentas

Petunia

Portulaca

Purple Heart

Salvia
Snapdragon
Strawflowers
Verbena
Vinca
Viola/Pansy
Zinnia

TRAILING ANNUALS

Asparagus Fern
Alyssum
Bacopa
Black Sweet Potato
Bougainvillea
Creeping Zinnia
Diascia
Evolvulus
Fuchsia
Helichrysum
House Plants – assorted
Ivy Geranium
Lantana
Lobelia
Lysimachia
Nasturtium
Petunia
Portulaca
Scaevola
Verbena
Vinca Vine

HERBS

Several herbs grow well in containers (especially clay pots) and combine well with annuals and vegetables:

Anise Hyssop
Basil
Chives
Cilantro
Lavender
Mint
Oregano
Parsley
Rosemary
Sage Thyme
Many others

VEGETABLES



Bush or dwarf varieties work best. Allow ample room for root growth and combine varieties with herbs and/or annuals for interest. Grow near the kitchen for convenience.

Cabbage
Cucumbers
Kale
Lettuce
Onions
Peppers
Radishes
Spinach
Squash

Swiss Chard (red-leaved is a good ornamental)
Tomatillo
Tomatoes

TREES + SHRUBS

Several varieties such as Japanese maples, evergreens, small fruit trees, small to medium shrubs, and roses make good container garden plants, especially where a large accent is needed in the landscape. Mix with trailing annuals/groundcovers for interest.

PERENNIALS

Perennials have a shorter season of bloom than annuals but mix well with them and other plants. After blooming they may be removed from the container and planted in the garden. Fill in with other plants.

Allium
Bergenia
Black-eyed Susan
Bleeding Heart
Coral Bells
Daylily
Ferns
Foxglove

Ground Cover Plants

Helleborus

Hosta

Mums

Ornamental Grass

Sedum

many others

SHADY LOCATION CONTAINER PLANTS

Container gardens are a way to brighten a shady nook.

Asparagus Fern

Aucuba

Begonia

Bleeding Heart

Bridal Veil

Caladium

Coleus

Ferns

Fuchsia

Helleborus

Hosta

House Plants – assorted foliage

Impatiens

Ivy

Vinca Vine

Yews

PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS

Fill the container to within 1" of the rim with a good quality potting soil.

Moisten soil thoroughly and plant at the same depth as in the nursery containers. Firm soil around the roots and water with a water-soluble fertilizer such as Miracle Gro, or Fish Emulsion, and water thoroughly. In addition, it is helpful to apply Osmocote, a slow-release fertilizer that lasts all summer.

Check containers daily, especially in hot weather. Keep a watering can and/or hose close by for convenience. Do not allow water to stand in saucers under containers. If not using Osmocote, water with a water-soluble fertilizer every two-three weeks. Check plants for insects and diseases on a regular basis and treat as needed.

CONTAINER GARDEN TIPS

- Annuals, bulbs, foliage plants, and herbs give a better show if planted very close together.
- One color masses are showier than mixed colors/varieties when viewed at a distance. Combination plantings are interesting for up close viewing.
- Combination plantings are attractive with an upright plant surrounded by mounding plants, with trailing plants cascading over the sides of the container.
- Houseplants may be moved outside for the summer and combine well with other plants. They are best grown in partial shade.
- Cacti, sedums, and succulents are great for hot, dry areas. They look best in low terra cotta containers or trough gardens.

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