

Container Gardening or "How to Get the Most Out of a Small Garden"

Growing plants in containers can be rewarding. By confining the plants to a relatively small space, maintenance can be less of a chore. The plantings can be moved to various sites for different purposes and then moved back. This fact sheet is to answer questions on what you need to get started. Containers can be combined and coordinated with any type of garden. Incorporating tropical foliage, shrubs, trees, vegetables, and flowers is easy to accomplish in a small area using a variety of containers.

Containers that can be used: **Practically anything**

- Crocks
- Urns
- Aquarium
- Tanks
- Jardinieres
- Tubs
- Barrels
- Pots
- Bowls
- Hanging baskets
- Pans
- Cans
- Rocks
- Chimney tiles
- Wire cages
- Cement blocks
- Wicker baskets
- Wire baskets
- Wooden baskets

Plants that can be grown in containers: **Practically anything**

annuals

Impatiens, Begonias, Torenia, Dusty Miller, Geraniums, Caladiums, Marigolds, etc.

perennials

Hostas, Lilies, Liriope, Astilbe, Crocosmia, Euphorbia, Heuchera, etc.

trees and shrubs

Junipers, Dwarf Hollies, Viburnums, Japanese Maples, Birch, etc.

tropicals

Dracaenas, Shefflera, Hibiscus, Crotons, Ficus, etc.

bulbs

Lilies, Daffodils, Iris, etc.

fruits and vegetables

Tomatoes, Peppers, Squash, Strawberries, Blueberries, etc.

succulents and cacti

vines

Bougainvillea, Mandevilla, Alamanda, Ivy, Clematis, etc.

Mixes for containers: Peat-lite mixes or soil mixes

The growing medium used in containers can be soil alone, it can be soil plus amendments, or it can be completely soilless. Whatever you choose, the medium must drain well. This is best accomplished by using a combination of soil amendments of various particle sizes to provide small air spaces, drainage, and adequate water-holding capacity.

You can use a wide variety of soil amendments to custom-blend your own soil mix. Keep it simple! Start with peat moss or good top soil as a base; this will constitute the bulk of your mix. Add perlite, pine bark, or sand to provide drainage and increase aeration. The addition of vermiculite will increase the water-holding capacity. The addition of peat moss to any mix will make the soil very acid, so always add ground limestone to maintain an adequate pH level. The addition of a granular-type fertilizer at low rates can be beneficial as a starter feed to new plants. Soilless mixes do not contain much in the way of nutrients, so the addition of fertilizer will feed the plants for a few days until you begin a liquid-feed program.

A suggested mix:

2 cu.ft peat - 1 cu.ft. perlite - 1 cu.ft vermiculite - 1 cu.ft. pine bark mulch

Add 1 lb. 5-10-10 granulated fertilizer

Add 2 lb. pulverized limestone

Planting and Transplanting

Pre-moisten your soil medium before filling the container. The medium should be moderately moist, not dripping wet. This reduces the dust associated with filling a pot or container of any kind, and it assures you that the medium will be uniformly moist. Once the planting is complete, water the container thoroughly to ensure good soil and root contact and eliminate large air pockets.

Remove the transplant material from the container it has been grown in and carefully examine the root system. It is usually a good practice to break up the circling roots before placing the plant in the larger container. If the plant is in a biodegradable container, remove the top edges to prevent wicking. Make sure that there are adequate holes in the base to allow for root emergence.

Container Size

Select containers that are large enough to provide adequate soil volume for one growing season. A container may be used to grow multiple plants as long as there is enough soil to support them.

Perennials, trees, shrubs, foliage plants will all need to be shifted up to larger containers periodically. Many plants do not suffer from being pot-bound. This can actually produce dwarfing effect that allows the plant to remain in the same container longer. Excessive roots

become a liability when they have displaced most of the soil in a container. When this occurs, the water-holding capacity is gone and more frequent watering is required.

Combining plants in one container gives you an immediate effect of fullness. It may become necessary to remove some of the plants over time to eliminate the domination of one plant over another.