



Container Gardening



Gardening in pots is a great way to decorate decks and add color to porches. Container gardening also allows you to expand your garden and planting area. You can grow just about anything in containers. Trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials, even herbs and vegetables! Here's how easy it is-

- 1. Choose a pot or container:** Pick a container, making sure it has a drainage hole.

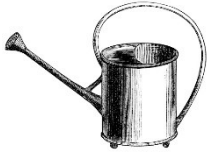


This is essential or the plants may drown when water collects at the bottom of the pot. Choose the right size for the plants you have. Don't put a giant sequoia in a six inch pot or one pansy in a whiskey barrel. Trees and shrubs will need a larger size to start.

- 2. Soil:** Fill your container about 70% with a good potting soil. A complete potting soil will have everything in it that your plants need, including compost and some meal fertilizers. We don't recommend putting things in the bottom of containers to fill up space. Plants like to grow in good soil, not rocks, pop bottles or packing peanuts. After placing most of the soil in, arrange the plants and top off with more soil, keeping the soil surface one inch below the rim of the pot.
- 3. Fertilizing:** Add the recommended amount of fertilizer for the size of the pot. Use a slow-release fertilizer such as *Osmocote*, or an organic fertilizer like *EB Stone Sure Start*. Fertilize at the time of planting and throughout the growing season. Annuals are heavy feeders and may need fertilization every two weeks. Trees and shrubs need less, perhaps just once a year.
- 4. Plants and their layout:** The number one thing to know when you start to select your plants is the amount of light the container will be getting. Once you have decided whether you're dealing with sun or shade, the classic container plan goes like this- a tall plant in the back or in the middle, depending on how you will position the pot, medium height plants in front of the tall and small or trailing plants at the very front. To create the most cost-effective container, use evergreen plants as your tall and medium heights. By doing so, you only will need to change out your small or trailing plants throughout the year. Depending on the season, switch from primroses to pansies and pansies to petunias. And remember, you can grow almost anything in a container. Herbs and vegetables would use the same format as above. Put a tomato plant in the middle, lettuce, or medium growing herbs at the base of the tomato and then a cucumber or zucchini spilling over the sides. The possibilities are endless and it really is that easy!

Gray Barn Green Thumb Guide

5. **Watering:** Water needs will vary depending on pot size and sunlight exposure.



Container plants need more attention than ground plants as they depend solely on you and any rain that falls from the sky. During the warmer temperatures of late summer, containers may need to be watered daily. Give a thorough heavy water rather than a light surface sprinkle. Plant roots are going to extend deep towards the bottom of the pot and the water needs to get all the way down there. A good way to judge whether you have watered enough is to continue until you see water draining out of the bottom of the pot. Watering isn't hard or scary. It just has to be done with awareness and regularity.

6. **Maintenance:** Deadhead spent flowers and pull off browning foliage on your container plants regularly. Pinch back annuals and perennials as their blooms fade and many will rebloom. Don't be afraid to edit---add or take out plants as the season goes on. This is a living garden; it's not supposed to stay the same forever! When you start to notice that containerized trees and shrubs are looking stressed- scraggly branches with small leaves for example- its time to do one of two things. One, pull the plant out and find a spot for it in the garden where the roots will have room to grow without the restriction of a container. Or two, root prune it. To do this, pull the plant out of the container onto a tarp or piece of cardboard. Shake off as much of the soil as you can so the roots are easier to see. Using some good clippers, prune off about 1/3 of the roots. Choose smaller roots to cut rather than larger ones. This will restrict growth and allow it to stay in the container a bit longer. This isn't a forever solution. Eventually the plant will need to be planted out in the garden. But root pruning will delay that for a couple more seasons.