



CONTAINER GARDENING

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Container gardening is both versatile and useful. You can move planted pots, in all sizes, around the garden to draw attention to seasonal features, change the color emphasis or try out a new color scheme, help create the framework for a new section, direct traffic or point up a transition from one part of the garden to another, extend the growing season, screen messy views or work areas, fill empty spaces and add height to existing borders.

Container gardening does not take as much time as regular gardening but watering can become a significant factor, especially as the weather warms. Some people fill their containers in late spring and completely replant them in July. Don't be afraid to evaluate your containers as the season advances, replacing any plant that hasn't performed to your expectations.

Patios, terraces, decks and entrances are natural locations for containers. Some people like groups of many pots, in different sizes. Some like one pot, strategically placed. Containers can be set on large stones in the landscape, used in front of shrubs or placed across the front of the garage.

The possibilities for container plantings are endless. You can add color and texture by using dwarf conifers, small shrubs, ornamental grasses, and alpines. Perennials (ferns and hostas for shade, grasses and heucheras for sun) will give you a wide choice. Even some tropical plants can be put into containers and over-wintered in the house. In sunny, hot, dry conditions, scaveola and portulaca are useful; partial to full shade calls for impatiens, begonias and torenia.

Please come to the nursery and discuss your container needs. We'll help you tailor your plantings to your specific wants and conditions.

Basic requirements include:

Proper drainage in the bottom of the pot (use saucers where possible). Add small stones or gravel to the bottom.

5 hours of sun daily although many people grow shade containers (see below).

A lightweight, "soilless" mix with compost added.

Fertilizing initially with a slow release fertilizer containing Osmocote. Add liquid fertilizer every week. Use the houseplant directions.

Daily watering (if the pot is in full sunlight) in hot weather or drought, preferably in the late afternoon. Some containers are now self-watering.

Herbs

Many cooks like to have favorite herbs and vegetables within easy reach. At the end of the season, herbs can be brought inside and over wintered. Even rosemary will survive if you mist it daily.

Maintenance

As the season goes forward, assess your containers. Cut back the plants as necessary to “keep the look”. Don’t be afraid of trimming --- it’s just on-going maintenance and the plants will fill out again quickly. Increase fertilizing if the plant leaves are yellowing.

Shade containers

Shade plants don’t dry out as fast as sun-loving plants so watering is easier.

Some plants -- Begonias, Impatiens, Coleus, Ferns, Ivy, Torenia -- are tried and true for a reason: they are completely reliable and recent introductions have greatly expanded the available choices.

Foliage can give color if you don’t have enough light for flowers.

Light shade: 4 hours of sun per day

Partial shade: 2-4 hours of sunlight per day

Full shade: Reflected light or almost no light

Hanging Baskets

Our hanging baskets are planted in a well-balanced soil mix, with Osmocote added at planting time. Use a liquid fertilizer 1 or 2 times a week.

Some plants (petunias, verbenas e.g.) are heavy feeders but New Guinea Impatiens doesn’t want any fertilizer at all.

If you want a mixed plant hanging basket, it’s a good idea to match the plants in the basket to each other so that they require equal amounts of sunlight, water and fertilizer. Plants will dry out at different rates so you will need to monitor the water needs of your plants. Be aware that hanging basket moisture retention is also affected by wind. If severe storms are in the area, put the hanging baskets in the garage for safety.