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Container Garden Guide





Why Grow Plants in

Container Gardening:
Container gardening is the process of growing plants in a container (such as a flowerpot) as opposed to growing plants in the ground.

Whether you are an apartment dweller or homeowner, container gardens have become a popular method for growing herbs and vegetables. There are a number of advantages to growing food in containers.

- * Convenient
- * Portable
- * Soil Control
- * Maximize Space
- * Pest Control
- * Creates Green Space



Types of

Terra Cotta



Glazed Clay



Plastic



Wood



Window Boxes



Hanging baskets

Before planting a hanging basket, be sure the hardware is sturdy and the location can support the weight.

Types of Containers



Improved Containers

There are a number of creative household items that can easily be made into containers for your plants. Anything that can hold soil and water, is durable and weather proof, free of contaminants, has good drainage, and sufficient depth for roots can be use to grow food in.



Where to Find

Low cost containers can easily be found in a number of places including thrift stores, hallway closets, the recycling bin, or your garage. They can be made out of many different types of materials and can be in many different shapes and sized. It is important to keep in mind that the environment the container garden will be in may have limitations on what type of container is used.

Important Things to Consider

- * Size
- * Weight
- * Strength
- * Sturdiness
- * Drainage





Choosing a Location

Sunlight

Most vegetables and herbs need a minimum of 6 hours of direct sunlight.

Convenience

Place the containers in a location that is accessible and that you can easily tend to.

Keep in mind that you will need to keep them out of reach of animals and pets that might harm your garden such as a dog or cat.

Water

Choose a location that has a water source nearby, or a location that you can easily carry water to.

Space

Some households, particularly ones in urban settings, have limited ground space for growing food. If this is the case consider growing container that utilize vertical space such as stackable pots or tier gardens, strawberry jars, or hanging pots.



Choosing Plants

When you are planting different types of plants in the same pot it is important to choose plants that like a similar environment. For example, when growing herbs in containers choose herbs that have similar soil, water, and light requirements to ensure that each of the plants have their individual needs met.



Preparing the Container

Cleaning the Container

Cleaning the container is extremely important, especially if you are using a recycled container or reusing a pot. This step is important in preventing the spread of any disease or bacteria that might impact the growth of the new plant.

The process of cleaning is as easy as filling a basin with hot soapy water and scrubbing the containers with a wire brush or stiff household brush. After you feel the container has been sufficiently cleaned, rinse well and allow it to dry over night.



Making a Drain Hole

Most store bought pots have proper drain holes that allow excess water to flow out. However, if you are converting another object into a growing container, you will most likely need to make one.

One way this can be done is using an electric drill to make a 1/2 inch drain hole at the bottom of the container. Depending on the type of material, you can also use a hammer and nail to punch a hole into the container. Be sure to take precautions when using tools to avoid injury.



Preparing the Soil

When gardening in containers it is important to use a soil that drains well and has lots of nutrients available for the plants.

There are numerous combinations of potting mix. The following recipe for a

healthy soil mix is one good example of what can be used.

If your soil is very dense you will need to add a little bit of material that will loosen it up.

You can use things such as bark, sawdust, coarse sand, or small gravel.

Healthy Soil Mix Recipe

½ Potting Soil

½ Compost

Mix the two materials together very well.

Soil can easily be obtained from your yard, garden, or a garden supply store.

If you buy soil, the easiest to work with is a multipurpose potting soil. If it has fertilizer mixed in and you are planning on growing vegetables, make sure that it is safe for growing food.



Planting in Containers

Recommended Materials

- Container
- Small stones, gravel, bark or similar material
- Potting Soil Mix
- Seeds or Plants
- Water



When to Water

During the hotter months you may need to water your plant up to two times per day. During the cooler months you will want to water less often but make sure that the soil does not completely dry out.

To avoid burning the plants, water early in the day and later in the afternoon during warmer months when the sun is especially strong.

Test the moisture level: You can test your plant to see if it needs water by sticking your finger into the soil.

- If the soil feels very wet it does not need more water and may be getting too much.
- If the soil feels dry more than one inch beneath the surface it needs water and may not be getting enough. You can also tell if your plant is not getting enough water if the soil has shrunk away from the sides of the container.



How to Water

Water your containers at the base of the plant and avoid getting the leaves wet if possible. Thoroughly soak the soil until the water drains out of the bottom of the container.