

CONTAINER GARDENING

Even on the smallest patio or porch, herbs and flowers can be grown in containers. Small pots restrict the root area and dry out very quickly. Deep-rooted plants require deep pots. The size and number of plants to be grown will determine the size of the containers used.

Important Factors to Keep In Mind When Planning a Container Garden:

- Make sure your pot has adequate drainage. Holes should be 1/2 inch across. Line the base of the pot with newspaper to prevent soil loss.
- In hot climates use light-colored containers to lessen heat absorption and discourage uneven root growth.
- Set Containers on bricks or blocks to allow free drainage.
- Line hanging baskets with sphagnum moss for water retention and keep baskets away from afternoon sun.
- If you choose clay pots, remember that clay is porous and water is lost from the sides of the container. Plants in clay pots should be monitored closely for loss of moisture. In an exposed location, container plants lose moisture quickly. Some plants will need to be watered daily, especially during hot, dry **weather**.

Most container gardeners have found that a soilless potting mix works best. Soilless mixes drain quickly, are lightweight, free from soil-borne diseases and weed seeds. These mixes can be purchased from garden centers.

A container garden will need at least five hours of direct sunlight each day, and many plants will benefit from even more, depending on the herbs grown. Check the planting guides for sunlight requirements.

Since potting mixes drain water rapidly, fertilizer will be washed out of the container as you water. Lighter mixes will require more frequent fertilizing than heavier mixes. It is a good idea to use a dilute liquid fertilizer with every other watering. Check the labels on the product to be sure it contains a complete, balanced solution that includes trace elements.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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