

Great Gardens in Small Spaces

Washington County Master Gardener™ Association



Getting Started with Container Gardening

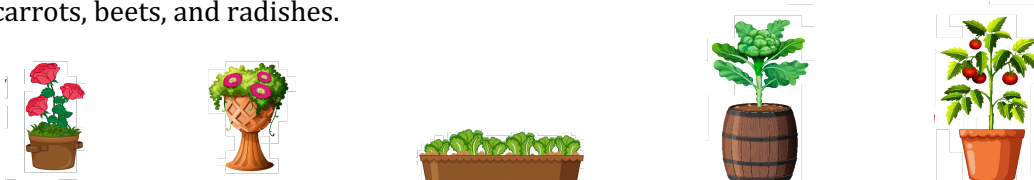
Containers can be small or large, indoors or outdoors, for ornamental or edible plants.

Right Place –yard, balcony, deck, porch, or patio can all be good places for plants in containers

- Select a location that fits the sun/light needs of your plant.
- Can you move the planter easily to follow the sun?
 - ◇ For large pots, a planter caddy with wheels can allow easy movement.
 - ◇ Most vegetables need at least 6 hours of sun daily to produce edible results.

Right Plant – plants that will be happy in your container and in the location you’ve chosen.

- Check the plant label carefully to find a plant that can thrive in the size of container and the place you will put it
- This may mean selecting a dwarf or smaller variety, or planting one plant per container, rather than several.
- Ornamental plants for decorative containers
 - ◇ Select plants that are already nearly full-size for a more finished look
 - ◇ Fill bare spaces in newly planted perennial containers with seasonal annuals to provide year-round visual interest
- Edible plants for containers
 - ◇ Many vegetable varieties have been developed for containers. Look for name clues, such as “Baby,” “Little,” or “Patio.”
 - ◇ Select vegetables/fruits that are young plants, rather than seeds, for an earlier harvest; for example, tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers.
- Some edible plants are easier grown from seed; for example, lettuce or other greens, peas, carrots, beets, and radishes.



Right Container – match the plant you want with the size and shape of a container that fits in your space

- Anything can be a container for edible and ornamental plants, teapots, wooden boxes, etc. as well as the usual planters.
- Determine the size of container(s) you will use.
 - ◇ Small (3-4”) pots of herbs or succulents may be put on a windowsill.

Great Gardens in Small Spaces

Washington County Master Gardener™ Association

- ◇ Medium (12-16") pots of flowers, greenery, or small/dwarf vegetables, can go on a porch, or balcony or even as a border in the yard.
- ◇ Large (20" or larger) containers may be used to grow a smaller flowering perennial shrub, some butterfly-attracting flowers, greens, or many desirable vegetables.

- Using a container –

- ◇ Make sure that your container has drain holes in the bottom – if it doesn't, poke or drill holes in the bottom to drain any excess water.
- ◇ Place a coffee filter over the pot hole if desired, to prevent loss of soil.
- ◇ Adding gravel or other material does not assist with drainage and is no longer recommended.
- ◇ Fill your container with a growing medium that is formulated for a container. Ground soil may contain too much clay for adequate drainage in a container.



- A large container is needed for multiple plants of the same or similar needs.
- Container plants can be spaced more closely than you would plant them in the ground.
- Plants in a container may also have a shorter life-span than plants in the ground, especially perennial shrubs.

Right Care – tending to your containers for happy plants

- Water: Plants in containers need more frequent watering than plants in the ground.
 - ◇ Check the plant label to see the moisture requirements of your plant.
 - ◇ Some containers, especially hanging planters need water twice a day if very hot.
 - ◇ Smaller containers need water more often than larger ones;
 - ◇ Clay pots dry out faster than plastic or ceramic;
 - ◇ More drain holes may mean quicker drying.
- Check the soil to determine if the plant needs water. Stick your finger in the soil; if the top 2" of soil are dry, it's time to water. If the soil feels damp to your finger, wait another day.
- Fertilizer:
 - ◇ Use vegetable fertilizer once or twice during the growing season for edible plants.
 - ◇ Decorative flower planters can benefit from a 'bloom' fertilizer, especially in a weak solution applied weekly.



Right Help – sources for more information about growing plants in containers

- Master Gardeners™ <https://bit.ly/MetroMG>
- Container Planting <https://bit.ly/plantingcontainers>
- Container Gardening <https://bit.ly/greencontainers>
- Gardening in Containers <https://bit.ly/container4plants>

More information:

