

Container

GARDENING

There are so many beautiful ways to create a stunning container for your front entrance, patio, or garden. By picking the flowers suitable for the conditions, regular care and fertilizing you can enjoy a summer of eye-catching flowers. Self-watering containers, ceramic pots, plastic pots, upcycled antique pots; there are so many options to plant in these days!



BEFORE YOU START

Change the potting mix every year. By the time the season is over, all nutrients in the mixture will have been used up. Recycle used potting soil in your compost or work it into existing flower beds.

PICKING YOUR PLANTS

Think about where the container will be placed and select plants that require similar growing conditions (such as full sun or shade, moist or dry soil, sheltered or not), yet have different growth habits and bloom times. For high-traffic areas, consider adding fragrant foliage plants such as lavender, thyme and rosemary.

Thrillers, fillers, and spillers

These three words, coined by garden designer Steve Silk, capture the essence of good container design. In the artful container, anything goes. Foliage only, or a mix of annuals, perennials, shrubs, herbs, summer bulbs, ornamental grasses, small evergreens, vines and tropical plants are all appropriate. It's entirely your choice.

Thrillers: the tall, upright, eye-catcher placed either in the centre or off-centre in the container; plant it first. For a tropical look try cannas, coleus, or Palm Grasses. Ornamental Grasses of all kinds make great Thrillers. Deciduous or evergreen shrubs also work great. Try using roses, a small

Japanese maple, an azalea standard or your favourite shrub or evergreen as the star of your container. In the fall, remove perennials, trees and shrubs from containers and plant them in the garden three to six weeks before the ground freezes

Fillers: take up mid-ground space without distracting from the thriller. Begonias, lantanas, salvias, parsley, low-growing grasses and numerous other foliage and flowering plants fall into this category.

Spillers: plants that flow over the edges of containers: sweet potato vines (*Ipomoea batatas*), ivies, trailing geranium, petunias, Bacopa and Bidens and no doubt many more discoveries you'll make at your local garden centre.



GETTING STARTED

- First water all plants in their cell packs or store-bought pots.
- Fill your pots with a special container potting mix such as Smart Mix. These mixes are specially formulated for your containers. Leave five to eight centimetres between the top of the soil and the rim of the container to allow water to slowly penetrate the root system rather than run off the surface.
- Add a tablespoon of slow-release fertilizer and mix into the upper part of the soil.
- Water the soil mixture.
- Arrange your plants and plant them at the same depth they are currently at in their cell packs
- Give the container one more watering.



CARE

- If the mix feels dry to the touch approximately one inch below the surface, then it is time to water your container.
- Due to the amount of water that container gardens require it is a good idea to fertilize them on a regular basis with a water-soluble fertilizer such 10-52-10 at least once every two weeks.
- Caution should be exercised to prevent over watering, which can lead to root rot. Gardeners should also keep in mind that plastic containers will fade in the sun. Therefore, placing colored plastic containers in a shady location will promote a nice appearance for a longer time.
- Removing spent blooms will encourage the growth of new blossoms. This will keep your flowers looking colorful throughout the season.