



Clever Container Gardening

From fruit trees to fairy gardens, container gardens add a pop of personality and color to your garden where you can control the soil and water.

Here are some tips on best pot-up practices and ideas to spark your creativity:

The Necessities

- **Proper Soil:** potting soil is specifically formulated for the optimal ratio of water-holding capacity and drainage. Planting mix is for mixing with your native soil when planting in the ground. Some plants require specialty soil to thrive, ask a Green Acres employee for advice on the right soil for the job.
- **Proper Fertilizer:** Because pot-ups are contained, nutrients need to be supplemented over time to keep plants healthy and thriving.
- **Proper Irrigation:** Consider how your container will be watered.

The Accessories

- **Plant Nanny's** are a fun tool to make sure your plant is getting the water it needs when it needs it, because it slowly releases the water over time.
- **Soil Moist** is a biodegradable polymer which absorbs water, then slowly releases it. Great for hanging baskets or hard-to-water spots.
- **Copper tape** is useful if you often battle with slugs & snails. They cannot cross its surface and it adheres easily to the pot.
- **Watering wands** will save you from an aching back, and save water if they come with built-in shut-off valves like the Damm Sunrise series.
- **The Ups-A-Daisy** is a plastic disc which settles into your pot about halfway down, so you don't have to fill the whole container with soil. Great for tall, narrow pots.
- **Saucers, pot feet** and mobile plant movers are all recommended for preventing stains from water run-off under your pot.

Finding your Favorite Pot

Almost any container can be made suitable for a pot-up, and it's a great opportunity to recycle old junk into something charming. Things to consider:

- Always choose a container with drainage holes. Adding rocks or gravel inside the bottom of your container does not improve drainage. However, setting the pot on top of a layer of gravel in a saucer can help the water drain. A container garden without drainage is more like a terrarium; check out our *Build Your Own Terrarium* handout to learn more.
- Covering your drainage holes with a few broken shards of terra cotta or wire mesh to prevent the soil from being washed away is fine, as long as it still allows water to drain.



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- Choose a container with enough room for the plants to grow. Some plants, such as succulents, don't mind being crowded in pots, but if you over-plant your pot, it will require more frequent watering.

Selecting your Plants

There are endless possibilities when it comes to pairing plants in a pot. Some basic guidelines:

- Group like things together; a pot-up should contain plants which all appreciate the same sun, water and soil conditions.
- Consider how your plants will look in different seasons for year-round interest.
- Have fun with texture! Flowers come and go, but the texture of a plant is always apparent. Mixing plants with contrasting textures adds another dimension to your living work of art.
- Stimulate the senses; fragrant flowers and foliage add an alluring touch.
- Don't limit yourself to just one type of plant; browse the annual, perennial, tree, shrub, cactus, vegetable, herb and groundcover sections for inspiration.

Get Creative with Color

Color can be an evocative tool, as it has powerful ties to mood and memory. There is no wrong answer when it comes to color in your container garden; it is simply a matter of personal taste.

Think about:

- The color of the container
- The location of the pot-up in your garden
- Complimentary colors vs. analogous colors
 - Complimentary colors are opposite on the color wheel. This includes pairings like red & green, blue & orange, and yellow & purple. These combinations are bold, playful and eye catching.
 - Analogous colors are close to each other on the color wheel, like green, yellow and blue. These combinations offer a more subtle harmonization.
- Foliage color combined with flower color
- The effects of cooling colors (such as blue, green and purple) as opposed to warming colors (such as red, orange and yellow)

Fun Finishing Touches

- Glass or stone mulch adds color and interest to a container while suppressing weeds
- Trinkets such as broken pieces of pottery, tchotchkes, coins, shells and driftwood are examples of things that can be incorporated for a whimsical feel.
- If you are inspired by small spaces, fairy gardening accessories are an adorable way to miniaturize the essence of a full-blown garden.



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