

Accessible Gardening: Container Gardening

Growing your garden in containers can make gardening a lot easier. It takes away the tough chore of having to dig in the dirt. Like other types of accessible gardening, it brings the garden to you. You can do your gardening without the hassle of bending, kneeling, and stooping that are part of traditional gardening.

Container gardening lets you put your garden wherever you want it. You may want to place pots where you want them first, before filling them with soil and planting. Otherwise, your containers may be too heavy to move. You can put your containers on wheels so you can move your garden around.

You may find that plants in your container garden drink more water than plants in the ground. This is normal. As a general rule of thumb, the shallower the soil, for instance a shallow window box or container, the faster the soil dries out.



Which containers are best?

Most plants will grow in containers. Most any container can be used, such as ceramic, metal, plastic, flower pots, window boxes, hanging baskets, cooking pots, terra cotta, and even shoes. The possibilities are endless. What you choose depends on how you want your containers and garden to look.

There are some general rules of thumb for which plants do well in which type of containers.

- Compact vegetables, like lettuce and cabbage, do best in hanging baskets or pots.
- Bush varieties, like beans, grow best in containers at least 18 inches in diameter.
- Vegetables with short roots, like peas, beans, cucumbers, kale, broccoli, and lettuce, grow best in containers measuring 1 by 4 feet and 8 inches deep.
- Vegetables with deep roots, like beets, carrots, onions, leeks, kohlrabi, corn, and zucchini, grow best in containers that are 2 by 3 feet and 8 inches deep.

 **GreenThumbs**
Healthy Joints



Selecting Containers

- Make sure your container has one 'good-sized' hole for every gallon of soil in the container. Drainage is important in container gardening because plants' roots can rot in soil that is soggy.

- Container size should be in proportion to plant size. One rule of thumb is the container should be one third as tall as the plant. This is measured from the soil it is growing in to the plant's tallest leaf.

- Although you can grow plants in any container, plastic containers are recommended. They are sturdy and low-cost.

Stay away from using dark plastic pots in direct sunlight. Dark plastic absorbs heat and gets very hot. Hot soil can damage the plants' roots.



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Resources

For more information on container gardening, visit <http://containergardeningguru.com>. This website is an entire guide to container gardening.

West Virginia University Extension Service also has information on container gardening. To find out more, visit <http://ext.wvu.edu> and search their website using the term 'container gardening'.

If you would like to talk to someone about accessible gardening, or would like a garden assessment done, call Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints at **800-841-8436**.

All printed materials are available in braille, electronic format, CD and large print.

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