

Container Plant Basics

What do Container Plants Need?

Drainage – At least one drainage hole in every pot

Sterile Environment – Scrub and sanitize pots using 1:10 Clorox to water mixture

Soilless Potting Mix – sterile, light in texture and weight, water-retentive

- **Recipe for ½ bushel basket (4 gallons) of potting media (Penn State University)**

Two gallons peat moss, Two gallons of either perlite OR vermiculite,

4 Tablespoons ground limestone, slow release fertilizer (Osmocote)

Mix thoroughly at rates recommended on fertilizer label. Moisten before using in pots.

Fertilizer – Slow release at planting; supplement with liquid fertilizer, as needed

Water – Frequent, deep watering!

Planting Process

- Cover drainage hole with mesh screen, coffee filter
- Use fill layer in large pots (inverted pot, soda bottles)
- Add soilless potting mix
- Incorporate slow-release fertilizer
- Untangle plant roots
- Place largest plant first
- Fill in soil to 1" of top of pot
- Water slowly and thoroughly

Vegetable Plant Combinations

Good companions

- Beans, carrots, squash
- Eggplant, beans
- Tomatoes, basil, onions
- Lettuce and herbs
- Spinach, chard and onions

Bad Companions

Beans with onions and garlic
Carrots with dill or fennel
Tomatoes or squash with potatoes
Onions with beans and peas

Recommended Container Plants

*Poisonous if eaten
(kids and pets)

Common name	Light	Latin name
Thrillers		
Canna Lily	○	<i>Canna sp.</i>
Ti Plant, Giant Dracaena	○◐	<i>Cordyline australis</i>
New Zealand Flax	○◐	<i>Phormium tenax</i>
Fountain Grass	○◐	<i>Pennisetum lopecuroides</i>
Angelonia	○◐	<i>Angelonia angustifolia</i>
Elephant Ears *	○◐	<i>Alocasia sp.</i>
Croton, Variegated	○◐	<i>Codiaeum variegatum</i>
Caladium *	○◐	<i>Caladium Bicolor</i>
Persian Shield	◐	<i>Strobilanthes dyeriana</i>
Upright fuchsia	◐	<i>Fuschia sp.</i>
Fillers		
Cabbage or Kale	○◐	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>
Lantana *	○◐	<i>Lantana camara</i>
Geranium	○◐	<i>Pelargonium x hortorum</i>
Pansies	○◐	<i>Viola x wittrockiana</i>
Coral Bells, Alumroot	○◐	<i>Heuchera sp.</i>
New Guinea Impatiens	○◐	<i>Impatiens hawkeri</i>
Wax Begonia	○◐	<i>Begonia semperflorens</i>
Euphorbia 'Diamond Frost'	○◐	<i>Euphorbia hypericifolia</i>
Dragon Wing Begonia	○◐	<i>Begonia sp.</i>
Coleus	○◐	<i>Solenostemon scutellarioides</i>
Spillers		
Petunias	○◐	<i>Petunia sp.</i>
Creeping Jenny	○◐	<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>
Sweet Potato Vine	○◐	<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>
Bacopa	○◐	<i>Sutera Cordata</i>
Million Bells	○◐	<i>Calibrachoa sp.</i>
Scaevola, Fan Flower	○◐	<i>Scaevola aemula</i>
Licorice Plant	○◐	<i>Helichrysum petiolare</i>
Dichondra 'Silver Falls'	○◐	<i>Dichondra argentea</i>
Wishbone Flower	○◐	<i>Torenia Fournieri</i>
Ivy	◐○	

Design Concepts

Contrast - Combine light and dark colors

Focal point - This is the first thing your eye is drawn to in the design

Texture - Contrast leaf size, shape, texture to provide interest

Echoing - Repeat colors to encourage movement of the eye

Grouping/Height - Use tall plants to add height, or group pots

Background - Coordinate container pots with landscape in color & design

Edible Plants Suitable for Containers

- Popular container vegetables: salad greens, peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, beans, chard, beets, radish, squash, cucumbers, herbs
- Challenging container vegetables: melons, corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes
- Choose Bush or Dwarf varieties for easier management; use a trellis or cage for climbers. Match container size to plant size; consider both the top and the bottom of the plant when you match.

Edible	Container Cultivars	Container size	Time to Plant	Light	Soil and Water
bean	mascotte, contender bush, roma II bush, royal burgandy, slenderette, slender wax	8-12 in deep; 4-5 gal; space plants 3 in apart	direct seed; plant after June to avoid bean beetle infestations	full sun	light loam or silt loam soils; avoid water stress when flowering and setting pods; drip irrigation is best
beet	red ace, ruby queen	8-12 inches deep; 2-3 gallon	direct seed early spring when soil warms every 2 weeks through fall; use thinnings for salad	part - full sun	wide variety of conditions will work; uniform soil moisture; not waterlogged
broccoli	packman, bonanza	2 gallon for 1 plant	direct seed when temps above 50F or transplant; cool crop spring or fall requires temps below 85F	sun/ shade depends on temps	cool, moist soil
carrot	nandor F1, caracas, Denver's half long, Nantes half long, gold nugget, baby spike, thumbelina	8-12 in deep (2 in deeper than carrot); 2-3 gal; 1 gal for 2 plants	direct seed early spring though summer	full sun	deep, fertile, loamy, well-drained soil
cucumber	spacemaster, patio snacker F1, salad bush F1, mini munch F1, patio pickle, pickle bush	8-12 inches deep; 4-5 gallon (dwarf 1-3 gallon)	direct seed; plant after June to avoid bean beetle infestations	full sun	fertile light soil; drip irrigation best
eggplant	hansel, gretel, orient express, orient charm, ichiban long, tsakoniki, patio baby, long purple	8-12 inches deep; 4-5 gallon	transplant 9-10 week seedlings when temps remain 64F+ at night	full sun	moderately fertile sandy, loam soils; warm temps
greens - arugula	astro, roquette	4-6 inches deep; 1-3 gallon	direct seed early spring when soil warms; every two weeks 'til early summer and again in fall	full sun to shade	uniform moisture; likes cool temps
greens - herbs	basil, bay, catnip, chervil, chives, cilantro, garlic, marjoram, parsley, pineapple sage, rosemary, thyme	1-3 gallon (consider plant size)	direct seed basil, catnip, chervil, chives, cilantro; transplant any herb; most reseed; plant garlic Sept. prior to summer harvest	sun (chervil prefers shade)	basil, chervil, pineapple sage require more water; soil must be a lighter, looser mix, and drier conditions; all herbs require well drained soil; mix should not hold water
greens - kale	prizm hybrid, black magic, blue curled scotch, dwarf blue curled, nero di toscana	4-6 inches deep; 1-3 gallon	direct seed early spring when soil warms and again in fall	full sun-shade	uniform moisture; cool temps
greens - lettuce	black seeded simpson, red salad bowl, royal oakleaf, buttercrunch, tom thumb, little gem, red sails	4-6 inches deep; 1-3 gallon	direct seed early spring; every 2 weeks thru summer/fall	sun - shade	well drained light, fertile soil; uniform moisture; likes cool temps