

Container Gardening

This lesson is being presented to hopefully give you information to make it easy for you to grow a few plants in containers that you can handle easily, move around, have colorful pots at entrances, porches or wherever you wish to place them as well as the kinds of plants that can be used for containers

Information for this lesson has been obtained from materials written by Betty Armocost, Master Gardening Program Assistant of Multnomah County and can be copied for your use in your study groups. Other information has also been added from my experiences as an avid gardener. This means of gardening can be done by anyone, young or old, and even by persons of limited mobility.

Objectives:

1. Participants will discuss:
 - a. The advantages of container gardening
 - b. The kinds of containers and their specific needs
 - c. The fact that container gardening is easily done by anyone
 - d. That the adaptability of container gardening allows it to be accomplished wherever you live
2. We will discover the types of plants that are easily grown in containers.
3. Equipment needed:
 - a. Containers with drainage holes
 - b. A kitchen spoon, a small trowel, or shovel
 - c. Potting soil material
 - d. Plants with similar needs or seeds

Items Needed to Teach Lesson:

1. Leader guide
2. Participant handout
3. You may wish to show a container
4. A tool or two
5. Some potting soil
6. Several plants or some seeds adaptable to container growing
7. Program evaluation



Oregon Association For
Family & Community Education

Container Gardening

Betty Armacost, MG Program Assistant
Multnomah County

ADVANTAGES OF CONTAINER GARDENING:

- * Containers are mobile and can be moved from one area to another.
- * Containers can be produce vegetables, small fruits, herbs or flowers and some can be brought inside for winter protection.
- * Environment can be changed easily, by moving plants for better or lesser sun exposure and wind protection.
- * Water efficient - water goes into container, right where you need it!
- * Easy soil preparation or no soil preparation with purchased soil mix.
- * No need for a lot of tools....a kitchen spoon or a small trowel work great!
- * Pests easily controlled.
- * Don't need garden space to use containers, they can be used on the porch or sidewalk.
- * Can be enjoyed and easily cared for by all ages...from toddler to grandparents.

WHAT PLANTS CAN BE USED FOR CONTAINERS?

- * New varieties of compact vegetables are available. Standard varieties can be grown on a trellis in a large pot.
- * Strawberries work well in containers.
- * Herbs such as cilantro, rosemary, oregano, chives, parsley etc.
- * Seeds can also be planted in containers....grow your own plants!
- * Cucumbers and vining plants can be grown on a trellis in a large pot to save space.

WHAT DO CONTAINERS NEED?

- * Regular attention and care.
- * Containers plants require more frequent watering than plants planted out in the ground.
- * Over 6 hours of sunlight if sun loving plants.
- * Flowers require warm days (wait to plant annual flowers until all danger of frost has past)
- * Porous soil mix. Garden soil can work, but needs to mixed with some compost, potting soil or other organic matter.
- * Good drainage. Don't let potted plants stand in water. Make sure when you water that water drains through the pot and that the soil has become moist to the touch.
- * Do best when the leaves are dry at night. (Prevents disease problems)
- * Enough water to maintain growth and flush salts through the pots.

KINDS OF CONTAINERS: The choice is almost unlimited!

- * Clay or plastic pots.
- * Plastic jugs & bottles with tops cut off and small holes in the bottom for drainage.
- * Baskets with liners
- * Disposable plastic cottage cheese cartons, wax-coated milk cartons, buckets, old pots or kettles.
- * Old sinks, bath tubs, concrete blocks.....etc. etc.
- * All containers must have drainage holes.

BASIC SOIL MIXTURES

- * Organic material maybe peat moss, rotted sawdust, bark dust, leaf mold or a combination.
- * Mineral material may be vermiculite, perlite, pumice, fine sand, or a combination of any 2 or 3.
- * Ingredient mixes can vary, but must provide:
 - * Fast drainage of water and salts through the pot.
 - * Air in the soil

* Moisture remaining in the soil mix after watering.

- ✿ If only a small amount of soil is needed, purchased mixtures may be the best choice.
- ✿ Home made mixtures (1/3 each peat, bark, compost or other organic matter). This makes a lightweight soil mix and promotes root growth and drainage.
- ✿ With the above mixture - measure ingredients together into a pile, dampen & mix.
Spread fertilizer over the pile and mix thoroughly.

FERTILIZERS

- ✿ You should begin fertilizer applications 3 weeks after planting. If frequent watering is required may start sooner.
- ✿ Use a complete fertilizer. Those usually recommended are: 5-10-10, 10-20-10, 10-16-8 (Explain nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) if appropriate for audience.
- ✿ Liquid fertilizers can be used such as fish, or granules that can be dissolved in water.
- ✿ When fertilizing, water pots first, let drain. When using dry fertilizer, water a second time to make sure the fertilizer is evenly spread and is absorbed into the soil mix. If using liquid fertilizer, it is not necessary to water a second time after fertilization.

WATERING NEEDS

- ✿ Container soil heats up and dries out rapidly. Check soil often for moisture; water when soil is dry 1/2 an inch below the soil surface.
- ✿ During early growth plants won't need as much water as when they are larger. Toward the middle of summer as plants mature, it may be necessary to water every day, every other day or even twice a day if it is extremely hot.
- ✿ Water thoroughly and slowly, in the morning if possible so that the leaves are not wet at night. When temperatures drop at night plants are often affected by diseases. Avoid watering during the heat of the day.

WEEDING AND GROOMING

- ✿ Pull weeds as soon as they appear. Try not to disturb the root system of the other plants in the pot.
- ✿ If you are growing flowers, cut off dead flowers and pinch back leggy plants. If you are growing vegetables, leave the flowers on the plant, as the flower withers, you will soon see the fruit being produced.

✿ Staking may be necessary for some plants. If you are growing tomatoes in a large pot a cage can be placed in the pot while the plant is young to furnish support while it grows.

✿ You can grow cucumbers on a trellis in a large container.

INSECT AND DISEASE CONTROL

✿ Insects and disease are not a serious problem for most container plants. When they do occur, pest control and disease information is available from your local Extension Office. (Washington Co. 725-2300). It is important to keep your plants healthy and moist, but not over-watered and you should be successful.



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