



Bucks Country Gardens

Gardening In Containers

Container gardening is an excellent way to grow flowers and vegetables, especially for people who love to garden but don't have the room. Any patio, deck, or balcony can be brightened with flowers in containers and they extend a warm welcome to all that come to visit. Colorful pots can also be placed among groundcovers under trees, for color in a situation where trying to grow flowers in the ground would be impossible. Hanging baskets of flowers can be casually strewn in trees, suspended by nylon rope or chain, or hung from the roof of your porch or balcony. By growing plants in containers, you can bring color into the areas where you spend the most time outside – instead of “way out there” in the garden!

THE CONTAINER TO USE

Choose a container that will add beauty to the flowers and will suit the décor of the patio or deck. A wide variety of materials are available, including clay, wood, plastic, fiberglass, and moss-lined wire baskets. All shapes and sizes are available to suit your needs – consider round or square pots, half-barrel, hanging baskets, half-wall pots and window boxes. Keep in mind these three facts when picking your container:

- 1. DRAINAGE** – Extremely important to outdoor plants, especially if they are exposed to the rain. Waterlogged soil will eventually kill your plants, so before planting, drill several drainage holes in the bottom of the containers. For all containers, it is not necessary to put stones in the bottom – it takes up valuable root room and does not contribute to the drainage.
- 2. SIZE OF THE CONTAINER** – The container must be a large enough that it will allow for good root development and adequate moisture retention throughout the summer. It is tempting to overfill a container with small plants at the beginning of the season, but as they grow they will compete for space and moisture and some will be “choked out.” Consider the size the plant will become.
- 3. PORSITY** – Some containers are porous and allow moisture to evaporate through the sides. Unglazed clay untreated wood, and moss-lined baskets all do this. These are good containers for plants that should dry well between watering. Other plants that need more moisture will also do well if they are watered often. Non porous containers hold moisture well (including plastic, glazed clay and treated wood.)

THE POTTING SOIL

Use a mixed potting soil that contains peat moss or compost. The organic matter keeps the soil loose and retains moisture. Don't use soil right from the garden – it is heavy and will dry and compact into a hard mass. You can make your own soil mix by blending equal parts of garden soil, sand, and peat moss or good compost.

PROPER WATERING

Water plants in containers thoroughly – until the water drips from the drainage holes, and then let dry until the soil on top becomes dry to the touch. Plants will need to be watered more frequently as the plants become larger and the weather gets hotter. Some containers may need water every day. Morning watering is best.

FERTILIZING TECHNIQUES

Use a well-balanced plant food recommended for flowers and vegetables, such as 5-10-10 or 20-20-20. Follow package directions. Plants should be fertilized at least once a month – or use a slow release pellet (such as Osmocote) that will release over the summer whenever you water.

SUN VS. SHADE

The plants you choose must be suited to the amount of sunlight you have to grow them in. Many balconies and porches have solid roofs and trees often shade decks and patios. Be sure to use shade-loving plants, which will grow and bloom well in these conditions. All vegetable plants require 6 or more hours of sunlight a day.

HELPFUL HINTS

1. Balconies:

Wall pots add color to side and back walls. Attach pots and window boxes to outside of railing for more space. Vary heights of window boxes on railings to screen undesirable views. Set boxes at bottom of railing so that you look out over them when sitting.

2. Flowering Baskets:

Baskets of impatiens, begonias, vinca and browallia make beautiful accents when hung from the lower branches of shade trees. Use plastic chain to protect the tree's bark.

3. Wall Pots:

Hang on fences and walls to break up large bare surfaces, beautiful on either side of large doorways.

4. Seasonal Changes:

Change the plants in your containers in spring summer and fall. Pansies give color in early spring, followed by summer-blooming annuals, and then with fall blooming chrysanthemums.

5. Color Mixes:

When mixing plants, watch that they all require the same type of light requirements and water conditions. Mix lots of colors together or pick a one-color scheme – such as blue salvia, blue lobelia and blue pansies in the same pot.

6. Greenery:

Lovely textures and dimensions can be added with the use of urn grass, vinca vine, ivy ferns and tropical foliage (in protected containers) such as spider plants, wandering jews, etc.

7. Vegetables and Flowers:

Mix these two in the same container – maybe using a window box or tub. It will \geq fancy-up \leq your vegetable pots so that they can be grown in highly visible spots.

VEGETABLES

Root crops (such as carrots) can be grown in a container with a soil depth of 12-15". Peas, beans, and vine crops can be grown on a trellis. Tomatoes should be planted at one plant per 12" pot. Look for new dwarf vegetable varieties that are very well suited for container growing.

SUGGESTED VARIETIES FOR CONTAINER GARDENING:

Flowers and Greenery:

Ageratum	Dianthus	Lobelia	Tuberous Begonias
Allysum	Dusty Miller	Marigolds	Tr. Dusty Miller
Aster	English Ivy	New Guinea	Urn Grass
Browallia	Ferns	Pansies	Verbena
Caladium	Flowering Vinca	Petunias	Vinca Vine
Celosia	Fuschia	Portulaca	
Coleus	Geraniums	Primrose	
Dahlia	Hens & Chicks	Sedums	
Daisies	Impatiens	Snapdragons	

Vegetables:

Beans	Eggplant	Peas	Spinach
Beets	Herbs	Peanuts	Squash
Carrots	Lettuce	Pepper	Tomatoes
Cucumbers	Onions	Radishes	