

# Container Gardens

**Containers:** Any large container with good drainage can be transformed into a planter, whether it be clay pots, glazed pots, barrels, oil drums, wood boxes, cement urns, etc. The container must be big enough to allow the plants to anchor themselves deep into the soil just as they would if they were planted in the ground. Drainage holes at the bottom of the pot or along the bottom rim are essential. Without proper drainage, excess water will collect at the bottom causing root rot and plant death.



**Soil:** Use a porous planting mix that will help ensure good drainage. Never use field or garden soil as they may contain weed seeds, insects or diseases.

**Planting:** Annual plants you purchase for your containers that come in small pots/packs tend to dry out quickly. Therefore, you should plant them as soon as possible. If you cannot plant them right away, water and leave them in the shade. The best time to

plant is in the evening or on a cloudy day. If you plant your container on a hot, sunny day, water immediately after planting and place in a shady area for a day or two.

When planting, keep the individual plant's root ball intact, and set into the soil. Leave room for each plant's root ball and a bit of buffer for the growth of new roots. Make sure all the roots are covered and that the plants are sitting securely in the container. The soil surface should be about ½" below the rim of the pot to avoid run-off.

**Beautiful results:** Spacing within a container is typically quite different from spacing within a garden bed. Create a mass of beautiful colour by planting annuals close together. Allow just enough space so that each plant can develop a healthy root system.

Vegetables are different in that they need to be given as much room in a container as you would normally give them in a garden bed. Sufficient spacing is necessary for the vegetables to properly develop and ripen.

Herbs are like annuals and can be grown closely together. You can create a container chock-ful of different kinds of herbs. Or you can mix herbs and annuals in one pot for a collage of interesting foliage and fragrances.

**Wood decking** can make an attractive balcony floor for displaying your container gardens. Wood doesn't transmit temperature fluctuations as readily as other flooring surfaces, which is beneficial for your pots and plants. It's also easier on your feet! Make sure to space boards so that the decking will dry out quickly after a hard rain or after watering your plants. Be careful that the spaces are not big enough to trap shoe heels or patio furniture.

## Winterizing outdoor

**pots:** Place pots made of clay, terra-cotta or stone on a block of wood and cover with a large plastic bag. The bag will prevent frost heaving and water penetration that can ruin the pot. Fill the bag with straw or other insulating material to protect both the plant roots and pot from temperature swings.



temperature