

Container gardening is one of the most rewarding ways to enjoy growing plants. Containers are moveable, easily renewed or changed. With good planning, containers can add interest to your garden in all four seasons. The possible plant combinations are limited only by your imagination!

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR CONTAINER GARDENING SUCCESS

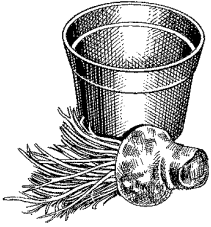
- Container or pot with drainage holes
- Sheet of landscape fabric
- Pea gravel or small stones
- Merrifield Potting Mix
- Polymer additive for moisture (Soil Moist®)
- Slow release fertilizer
- Liquid (soluble) fertilizer
- Saucer
- Pot feet
- Composted cow manure (optional)

HOW TO COMPOSE A CONTAINER GARDEN

1. Fit a piece of landscape fabric closely into the bottom of the container (over drainage holes) to contain soil, prevent clogging of drainage holes and keep small varmints out.
2. Layer one inch of pea gravel or small stones on landscape fabric to promote drainage.
3. Fill the container halfway with potting mix (25% composted cow manure recommended for perennials and shrubs). Add moisture-retaining polymer and slow release fertilizer (i.e. **Merrifield Flowering Plant Food** or Osmocote®). Mix with soil.
4. Fill the container to $\frac{3}{4}$ full with potting mix. Again add polymer and slow release fertilizer. Mix well.
5. Wet the soil and additives thoroughly. (Easier to do now than after planting.)
6. Place your plants in pot. Top off container with potting mix (without additives) to within 1-2 inches of top.
7. Water gently but thoroughly until all soil in container is completely wet.
8. Cover top of soil with pea gravel or small stones to reduce moisture loss, soil loss and animal digging.
9. Place container on a saucer filled with pea gravel for good drainage. Use pot feet to help air circulate underneath, prevent surface water damage and make for easier cleaning.
10. Check daily for watering needs until you establish a routine. Water only when necessary.
11. Fertilize with liquid fertilizer (i.e. Jacks Classic® or Miracle Gro®) approximately every two weeks or as needed for optimum plant growth.



MOSS BASKETS



Moss baskets are easy to create and especially beautiful. They can be hanging baskets, free standing or half baskets for hanging on a wall. Line a basket with wet, long fiber sphagnum moss. (Pre-made moss liners can also be purchased. Cuts are made in the liner to insert plants on the sides.) Working your way from the bottom to the top of the basket, fill with potting soil while tucking plants in through the wire and the moss. Add polymer and slow release fertilizer as you go. Fill the top with plants. Cover soil with moss for a nice even look all around.

STRAWBERRY POTS

Start from the bottom to the top, placing your plants into the soil as you work your way up. Put an empty paper towel roll or PVC pipe down the center of the pot as you fill with soil. Fill the tube with pea gravel, and then remove after you fill the pot. The water will seep through the channel you create, and all the plants will receive water more efficiently. Add polymer and slow release fertilizer as you fill the pot with soil.



SURVIVING WINTER

Plants are less winter hardy in containers than in the ground. Temperatures below 28 degrees can injure or kill many plants and cause containers to crack. Protect your containers and the plants in them.

The size and the type of container are factors to consider. Larger containers hold more soil and over winter better than small pots. New containers made of polyethylene or concrete are more frost resistant. Terra cotta or ceramic containers are more susceptible to winter damage. If left outside during the winter, these should be elevated off the ground to prevent excess moisture from getting into the pot.

Frost resistant, terra cotta and ceramic pots may still need protection when temperatures drop below 28 degrees. You may need to protect your container and plants from freezing by wrapping the pot in micro foam or bubble wrap. A more decorative look and extra protection can be achieved by adding fabric such as burlap or vinyl over the foam or bubble wrap. Store unused containers in a shed, or garage to shelter them from the elements.

PLANTS FOR CONTAINER GARDENS

Many plants are suitable for containers! Carefully choose plants that grow well together in similar conditions. Choose from annuals, perennials, bulbs, ornamental grasses, greenhouse tropicals, shrubs and small trees

MERRIFIELD

8132 Lee Highway
Merrifield, VA 22116
703-560-6222

FAIR OAKS

12101 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22030
703-968-9600

GAINESVILLE

6895 Wellington Road
Gainesville, VA 20156
703-368-1919