Container Gardening

Or How to Garden Almost Anywhere!
How do we garden?  How many ways...
Garden in a WHAT?!

Funky blue jeans garden  Thriller/filler/spiller container garden
Pros & cons of container materials

- Pressed paper – biogradable, vegetables
- Coir – husks, inexpensive
- Ceramic – heavy, colorful, $$ range
- Terracotta – clay, fragile, permeable
- Fiberglass and Resin – lightweight, durable
- Plastic – generally cheapest, many sizes
- Wood – attractive, eventually rots
- Metal – durable, handle heavy plants
- Concrete – better with age, large plants
Straw bale garden: “C” or “RB”? 
Reasons for container gardening

- Allows us to garden in almost any location.
- City, suburbs, country.
- Poor growing conditions: soil, sunlight, space.
- Good for people with disabilities or mobility problems.
- Low cost/low input.
- Easy to be successful.
- Start sooner in spring.
What do you Need?

- Plan
- Place
- Pots/containers
- Potting Media
- Plants or Seed
- Provide Water & Nutrients
Have fun! Grow something!
• Limited mobility? Garden while seated!
• Match height of container / height of chair
• Locate container where safely accessible
• Make sure water source nearby or use drip irrigation

Container gardening sitting
- Locate container in permanent location
- (it will be heavy)
- Consider material
- Consider aesthetics
- Ensure excellent drainage
- Consider water source
Drip Irrigation for container gardens

- Best drip systems apply water slowly & directly to roots
- Reduces fluctuations in soil moisture
- Need backflow device
- Battery operated timer
DIY container watering system

- Uses basic materials
- 2 litre plastic soda bottle with lid
- Add commercial watering spikes
- Drill holes in cap
- Remove bottom of bottle w/ sharp knife
- Dig hole, bury 1/3 of bottle cap side down
- Add fertilizer to bottle every few weeks
• Drainage holes
• Bottom vs sides
• No holes?
• ½ inch layer of gravel
• Or
• Pot-in-Pot

Drainage – a priority
• ROT = Rule of Thumb
• Group plants with similar needs
• Just like landscape beds
• How much sun
• How much water
• How much fertilizer
• Group fragrances

Group plants with similar needs
Container soil is a challenge due to small volume of media used to support plant growth

Desirable traits:
- Water and nutrient retention
- High porosity to ensure good aeration and root growth
- Low bulk density (fluffy and light)
- Free from weeds, diseases, human pathogens
- Not soil from your garden by itself
Check significant differences
• Commercial mixes: “Container Mix” or “Self-watering container mix”
• Organic blend: 5 gallons finished compost, 1 gal. sand, 1 gal. vermiculite or perlite, 1 cup granular all purpose fertilizer (organic)
• Standard blend: 1 bushel vermiculite, 1 bushel ground spagnum moss, 8 Tbsp superphosphate (0-20-0), 8 Tbsp ground limestone, 2 cups bone meal
• Garden soil: 25% sand, 25% garden soil, 50% finished compost

The right soil...
• Some potting mixes include fertilizer
• Some don’t
• Check label
• Container plant roots can’t spread into surrounding soil
• Need to replenish soil nutrients regularly

Fertilizers and Feeding – what’s best?
Grow lettuce and corn in containers!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables for containers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Bush beans</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Beets</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Carrots</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cabbage</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Swiss chard</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cucumbers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Leaf lettuce</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bell peppers</td>
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<td>• Summer squash</td>
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<td>• Tomatoes</td>
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<td>• Turnips</td>
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<td>• Eggplant</td>
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<td>• Kale</td>
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<td>• Green onions</td>
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Patio tomatoes BR AL
Container carrots and cabbage
Common mistakes for growing tomatoes in containers gardens

- Container size
- Not enough sun
- Too much water
- Too little water
- Overcrowding
- Chilly roots
- Starving plants
Other plants suitable for containers

- Anise Basil
- Caraway Dill
- Chives Parsley
- Fennel Coriander
- Chervil Savory
- Lovage Mint
- Majoram Thyme
- Tarragon Lemon balm
- Zinnia
- Ivy germanium
- Sedum
- Gomphrena
- Texas sage (salvia greggii)
- Scented geraniums
- Petunia
- Verbena
- Heliotrope
- Dwarf dahlias

Movable, colorful, easy to change and arrange
• Terra cotta (clay) pots
• ½ of whiskey barrel
• Plastic tubs or buckets
• Hay bales
• Earth box (pictured)
• Upside down containers
• Containers on wheels
• Bushel basket
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perlite – crumbled takeout container</th>
<th>Other ingredients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vermiculite</td>
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<td>Compost</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peat Moss</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- Scrub old pots with 10% bleach solution before re-using
- Season new clay pots by submerging them in water for 15 mins prior to filling with soil
- Add sand to bottom of container to keep tall plants from tipping over
- Non-biodegradable styrofoam packing peanuts used instead of stones for drainage in bottom of pots to reduce weight
• Slightly pre-moisten soil before putting in pots.
• Sphagnum peat works best with warm water.
• Drainage holes work best if on sides of containers rather than bottom; excess water drains out better (contested suggestion).

• Choose right size container for plants.
• 1-2 gal: pepper, chard.
• 4-5 gal: tomato, cucumber.
• 6-10” diameter pots: greens, beets, radishes, onions, lettuce.
• Type of container
• Soil mix
• Drainage
• Selecting plants
• How big will they get
• Watering
• Fertilizing
• Maintenance
• Pests/diseases

So many ways to grow in containers: consider these ....
Not only soil goes into planters. Tip: use one third soil, two thirds Styrofoam packing peanuts. Some add pantyhose or fabric between peanuts & soil (optional). Add soil on top of peanuts.

What about those big mall planters?
Big Three Considerations

- Drainage
- Water
- Fertilizer
The End and a Beginning