



HELLO  
MAY !

# Garden Topics

- Container Gardening
- Plant Combinations
- Books To Read

# Container Gardening

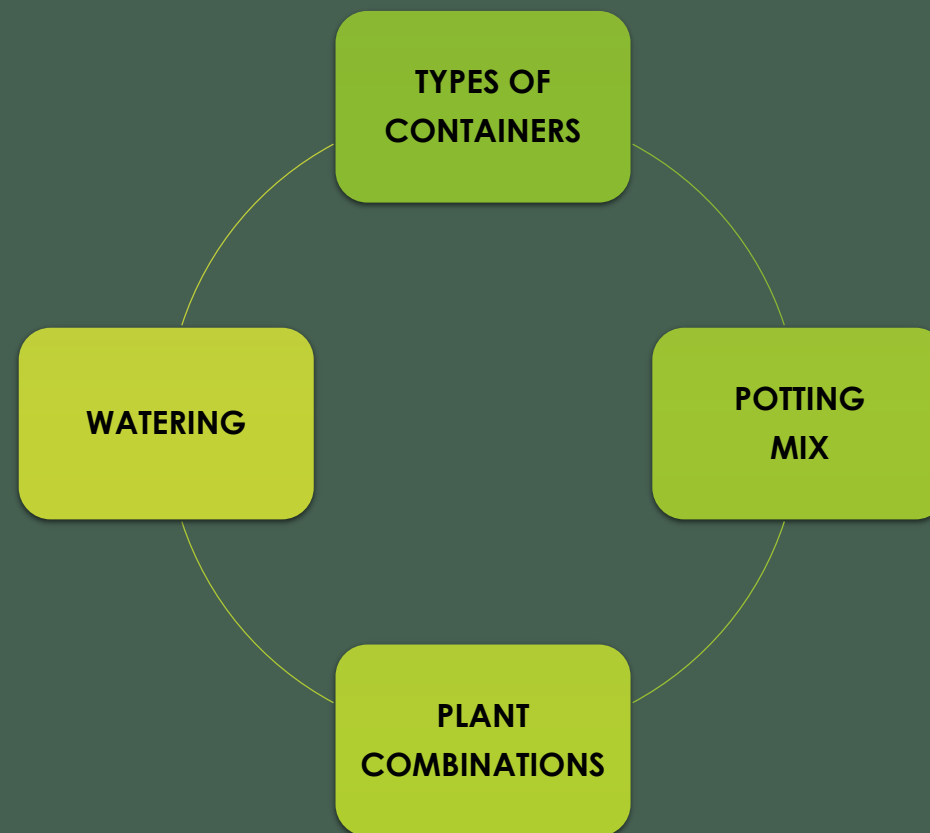
Many gardeners choose to grow their vegetables and herbs in pots. Perhaps you don't want to have a garden bed for a variety of reasons. Space may be in short supply, maybe you live in an apartment or condo. Maybe your time to garden is limited and constantly interfered with by the weather. Or, maybe you just want to grow herbs which can be easily available by you kitchen door.

No matter the reason, it's your choice to enjoy gardening however you choose. And, with a plethora of plant combinations with beneficial flowers, your containers will not only be stunning, but offer a variety of foods right at your fingertips!

First things first, let's gather some knowledge...



# Getting Started







## Terracotta Pots

Using terra-cotta pots indoors or outdoors add warmth to any garden. They also carry the advantage of "breathing," which prevents water from being trapped in the pots, which can cause roots to rot. On the other hand, terra cotta pots absorb water, and this wicking action makes soil dry out more quickly than it does in garden beds or in other pot mediums. Prepare terra-cotta pots carefully before planting to reduce risk of plant disease and to make them as receptive as possible to nurturing your prized herbs, flowers, vegetables and even small trees and shrubs. Learn more from the link below...

[How to Prepare Terra Cotta Pots](#)

# GLAZED CERAMIC

These pots are mostly imported, formed from clay, and fired hot enough to be durable. They are coated in colorful , glossy glazes that are a designer's dream... perfect for any deck or patio... and available in a variety of sizes. The drainage holes are usually a good size so a drip tray will be needed to keep the excess water contained when watering. They are weighty enough to withstand high winds. Put a coffee filter over the drainage hole to keep soil in when the water drains. To lighten the weight just fill the bottom with packing peanuts to 1/3 of the height and then cover them with landscape cloth so the potting mix doesn't fall through. Fill the rest of the 2/3's with potting mix.

Like terracotta pots, these are susceptible to breakage from cold wet winters if left outside. I store mine over the winter in the garage or basement. If you must keep them outside, be sure to empty them and cover them with a plastic bag or a piece of wood to help keep them dry.

The glaze on the pots protect them from the cracking that can occur on unglazed pots during cold winter weather, and in mild climates cold damage is rarely a concern. They are most likely to suffer damage if they are left empty during the winter and water collects inside them. Even a light freeze can make the water expand and put stress on the sides.





## GROW BAGS

Lightweight but heavy duty, these bags fold flat for easy winter storage and open up for bigtime container gardening!

While practical for anyone, they are outstanding for those with a weight limit on their balcony or too little off season storage space. They are available in a variety of materials and colors, varying from burlap (not long term) to durable fabric that is breathable and reusable. Plants thrive in the breathable fabric!

Read more... [Pros and Cons of Garden Bags](#)



# Soiless Potting Mix



BIG NO !

Field soils can be appropriate for growing plants in the garden, but these soils are unsuited for growing plants in containers. In most cases, the texture of field soils is simply too fine to ensure adequate aeration in containers, and pots or planters of any size are generally too shallow to permit proper drainage. Soiless media have larger particles, which form bigger spaces or pores to hold air in the medium, while still retaining enough water for plants to survive. Adding too much water-absorbing material, which expands greatly when moistened, can knock your plants out of their container.

See more here... [What is a Soiless Potting Mix](#)



# FERTILIZER

## Fertilizing Your Vegetable Planters

Fertilizer is especially important when you're growing vegetables in containers. In fact, you just won't succeed if you don't use some kind of fertilizer. I recommend mixing a granular organic fertilizer into the soilless potting mix when planting, then weekly feeding with a water-soluble fertilizer.

There are several reasons why fertilizer is important. First is that the growing medium in the container has few, if any, nutrients. Your plants depend on you to provide the nutrients they need. Second is that containerized plants get watered a lot, and every time you water you wash some nutrients from the soil. The third reason fertilizers are necessary is that in a container garden, you are packing lots of plants into a small space. One 2' x 2' self-watering planter might contain a tomato plant, two pepper plants, a basil plant and some parsley. That's a lot of foliage and fruit to feed from a few gallons of "soil".

Always be sure to read the packaging of store bought fertilizer. Make sure it is safe for consumption and follow the application directions.

# WATERING

Container grown plants dry out quickly and require more water than their backyard counterparts growing in open soil. This is because potting soil is often lighter and less compact than regular home garden soil and the water holding capacity around the plant is determined by the size and type of the container. Watering potted plants once a day or even twice daily may be necessary, especially if the weather turns hot and windy or your outdoor containers are located in full sunlight. Watch closely, and check moisture levels often. If the growing media appears pale or cracked, or is dry to the touch below the soil's surface, it's time to water.

The easiest way to water container plants is with a watering can or gentle hose. However, when you water make sure that you are watering the soil and not just the plant's leaves. Continue watering until it runs out the drainage holes in the bottom of the pot. The idea is to water thoroughly but allow enough time between waterings for the soil to begin drying out. A moisture meter, available at many garden centers, can be used to instantly determine when to water your plants. If the potting mix remains soggy for too long, air will be forced away from the roots and your plants may suffocate or drown.

[Watering Your Container Garden](#)



# GUIDE TO PLANTING DEPTH

For the healthiest garden, here are minimum soil depths to keep in mind when choosing a container:

**4-5 INCHES:** chives, lettuce, radishes, other salad greens, basil, coriander

**6-7 INCHES:** bush beans, garlic, kohlrabi, onions, Asian greens, peas, mint, thyme

**8-9 INCHES:** pole beans, carrots, chard, cucumber, eggplant, fennel, leeks, peppers, spinach, parsley, rosemary

**10-12 INCHES:** beets, broccoli, okra, potatoes, sweet corn, summer squash, dill, lemongrass

Pots and containers for growing vegetables and herbs on patios, balconies and roof tops must be large enough for the crop to mature. A container must hold the soil and moisture that deliver nutrients to growing plants allowing them to leaf, flower, and fruit. The pot must be large enough to accommodate the plant's roots. And a pot should be large enough that the height and weight of the above ground growth of the plant does not tip the container.

Some plants are small enough that you can grow more than one plant in a container; other plants grow so large that you would not want to grow more than a single plant in a container.

Soil depth of at least 8 inches/ 20 cm will hold sufficient soil, nutrients, and moisture to support a good yield from almost every vegetable and herb grown in a container. (Expect to water two or three times per week.) Smaller containers holding less soil may require more frequent watering and fertilizing.

# Plant Combinations and Companion Planting

This is the fun part. As part of our summer display gardens, we usually plant a few containers with a broad assortment of vegetables and herbs. Some of them are "theme" pots (an Italian pot, a spicy pot, a pickles pot), some are planted for maximum production (lettuce followed by beans, followed by broccoli, followed by winter greens), and others are focused on a single crop (tomatoes, strawberries, potatoes).

When combining several different types of plants in one pot, it's best to match plants that have a similar need for water and fertilizer. For example, rosemary, which likes hot and relatively dry conditions, would not be a good match with water-hungry cucumbers. To maximize space, you might want to combine a trailing plant with an upright plant.

Some plants actually grow better when grown near a compatible companion. On the other hand, some plants don't seem to grow as well when paired with certain plants. Sometimes the reasons are simple (carrots, dill and fennel are all in the same plant family and will compete for the same nutrients) but others are more mysterious. The list below offers good plant combinations — as well as combinations to avoid.



Some plants actually grow better when grown near a compatible companion.

### Good Companion Plants:

Beans, carrots, squash  
Eggplant, beans  
Tomatoes, basil, onions  
Lettuce, herbs  
Spinach, chard, onions



### Combinations to Avoid:

Beans with onions and garlic  
Carrots with dill or fennel  
Tomatoes or squash with potatoes  
Onions with beans and peas



## Books To Read !

For more information about container gardening and ideas to personalize your garden spaces, request your reading choices in book or e-book formats by clicking on the links below !



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E-Books