



Container Gardening

Perfect for people with limited gardening space, container gardening is a wonderful way for all of us to beautify our surroundings and improve our urban environment.

Since most containers are portable, you'll be able to move your plants around and give your living area an instant splash of color. For instance, a container filled with flowering annuals or perennials and a clump of tall ornamental grass makes a great statement by your doorstep or near your patio.

Containers come in a variety of styles and sizes. Even old buckets, milk cans, and wheelbarrows can be recycled and used. Just make sure these containers have holes for adequate water drainage.

Here are a few tips to remember when choosing a container:

- Be sure the container is big enough to support the plants you are putting in it
- Make sure there is adequate drainage
- Never use a container that has held products harmful to plants or people

Clay containers are long-time favorites of Heirloom Gardens customers. But remember that clay is porous and moisture is more readily lost. Also, clay containers are more breakable and heavier than plastic.

Wood is another popular material. Redwood and cedar containers are relatively rot resistant.

POTTING SOIL

Regular garden soil is not always best for container gardening since it may not drain as fast. This can make it difficult for air to reach the roots of your plants. On the positive side, more microorganisms and micronutrients that benefit plant growth are present in garden soils. With the help of an Heirloom Gardens Texas Certified Nursery Professional, you can create the best planting media for your needs.

We offer many choices of soil for your container planting:

- **Premium Soil** – Made with indoor plants in mind. This soil has a rich organic base of peat moss and composted bark, and a small nutrient charge with some perlite added for texture and appearance.
- **Organic Humus** – Formulated specifically for Brazos Valley gardeners. This soil mix contains acid-forming minerals, peat moss, and composted bark mulch.
- **Top Soil Mix** – An ideal “fill in” soil mix for all purposes. Our soil mix works well for filling in low areas in your yard, blending with potting soil to add weight, or as a standalone planting mix. Top soil mix is great for containers because it has added sand, which will increase your container weight, making it less likely to blow over on a windy day.
- **Rose Planting Mix** – Our newest mix carries a virtually neutral pH and has no added nutrient package. The mix is formulated for hibiscus, mandevilla, plumeria, and all patio container plants.

WHAT TO GROW

Just take a walk through our garden center and you'll see lots of ideas. All annuals, especially those that are heat tolerant, do well in containers.

Here are some general tips to consider.

- Think logically when planting in containers. Plant shade-loving plants together and plant sun-loving plants together. Also, remember that both groups of plants have different watering needs.
- Consider layers, textures and colors when making your selection. Masses of color work best in smaller areas. Whiskey barrels containing a tall accent perennial with a low border of annuals and cascading or trailing ivy

along the barrel's rim lend a tidy look to your outside area.

- Watch how you water. Allow enough water to saturate the pot until you see water coming out from the drain holes. Avoid using a direct stream from a hose. Some containers drain more rapidly than others. Small containers usually retain less moisture. When you water should depend on the type of plant, potting mix, and weather conditions. In the hot summertime, you may find that you need to water once or twice every day.
- Regularly feed your plants. The addition of a slow fertilizer at planting time will help, but regular feeding during the growing season will give you optimum performance.
- Consider adding mulch. Not only will an organic layer of mulch reduce water evaporation and keep the soil cool, it also makes your containers more attractive.
- Don't forget to "deadhead". This term refers to the removal of dead blossoms to encourage more blooming. Unless you have planted vegetables, berries or fruits, you shouldn't encourage your annuals to produce fruit of seed if your desire is to have color all season long. On the other hand, many old gardens are kept going from year to year by the systematic collection of seed for replanting. This will not preserve hybrid varieties, but you'll have strong plants coming back year after year.

- Lay out what is going into each container. Remember the sizes of full size plants.
- Plant one plant at a time, beginning in the center and working out to the edges.
- Scoop out a hole to start with, place a small bit of slow release fertilizer in the hole, put a plant in the hole, fill in around the roots, and take care not to break or damage tender branches of nearby plants. Proceed to the next plant.
- When all the plants are in the container, add a little more soil to make sure it's filled to about 1 inch from the top of the container. Then gently "water in" the new plants.
- Mulch was mentioned earlier as an attractive top layer, but small gravel or stones also work nicely to keep the soil in place, especially during our heavy rainy periods.

Container gardening is not just a trend. Potted bonsai trees have been around for hundreds of years. Oranges were planted in containers at the Palace of Versailles. Learn to enjoy the beauty of gardening in containers!

WATER CONSERVATION

Containers allow you to control the amount and distribution of water to specific plants. Check your containers at least once a day, twice on hot, dry or windy days. Feel the soil to determine whether or not it is damp. If you are away from the home often, consider an automatic drip irrigation system, available with timers that can be set to water on a schedule and operate for weeks on batteries. Of course, more elaborate electronic watering systems can also be used.

HOW TO PLANT

- Place a piece or two of broken pottery over the bottom hole of your container. This will help prevent soil from washing out of the pot. Gravel in the bottom of the hole will add weight, but will not increase the drainage.