



Vegetable Gardening in Containers

Choosing Your Container

1. Bigger is usually better, can use clay, plastic, wood, grow bags or even reusable grocery bags.
2. Drainage is critical, use a drill to make holes in the bottom of your containers if there are none.
3. Vegetable plants do not like to have their roots in standing water.

Choosing Your Soil Mix

1. Buy soilless mix, potting soil or container soil. Amend the mix with compost or organic matter.
2. Do not use garden soil, it is too dense to use in containers.

Choosing Your Vegetables

1. Grow what you will eat. Keep it simple and small to start with.
2. Look for varieties bred to be grown in containers. Look for varieties for hanging baskets, those labelled early or compact, dwarf, bushy or baby.

Cool Season Vegetables

1. These are plants that like the cooler weather of mid spring.
2. Includes leafy greens, root vegetables, peas.
3. They will require more fertilizer than vegetables grown in the ground. Generally a diluted, balanced fertilizer is fine for these vegetables.
4. Most of these vegetables can be re-seeded in late summer for a fall harvest.
5. Potatoes can be grown in a 5 gallon container.
6. Beets can be started 2 to 4 weeks before the last frost date, try "Bull's Blood", "Albino", "Baby Gladiator" or "Early Wonder".
7. Choose short-rooted carrot cultivars. Try "Nantes", "Orange Rocket", "Little Finger", "Scarlet Nantes" or "Paris Market", which is a round carrot.
8. Peas will germinate in soil temperatures as low as 5C. They stop producing when the temperatures are higher than 24C. Grow in 3 gallon containers. Try "Oregon Sugar" snow pea, "Lincoln", "Sugar Daddy", "Super Sugar Snap" and "Sabre". Choose mildew resistant varieties.

Warm Season Vegetables

1. Plant after all threat of frost is past, June 1st is ideal. Temperatures should be a minimum of 20C.
2. Beans do not transplant well so should be directly seeded in a 3 gallon or larger container.
3. You can grow bush or pole beans, if growing pole beans insert vertical supports when seeds are sown. For pole beans try "Stringless Blue Lake", "Purple Podded Pole", "Fortex", "Lazy Housewife" or "Rattlesnake". For bush beans try "Maxibel", "Royal Burgundy", or "Dragon Tongue".
4. Tomatoes will need support and are heavy feeders, so add lots of compost and fertilize regularly through the growing season. Grow in 5 gallon containers or larger. Varieties suggested include cherry tomatoes, such as "Tiny Tim", "Ditmarcher", "Tumbling Tom", "Sweet One Million", "Jelly Bean" or "Black Cherry". Tomatoes need regular watering, do not allow them to dry out.

5. Eggplants grow well in containers, use 5 gallon or larger size, fertilize monthly. Try dwarf varieties like “Bambino Baby”, “Little Fingers”, “Short Tom” or “Calliope”.
6. Grow peppers in a 3 gallon or larger container, fertilize monthly. Try varieties like “Little Bells”, “Gypsy”, “Sweet Cherry”, or grow hot peppers like “Aurora”, “Nosegay”, “Spanish Padron” or “Filius Blue”.
7. Cucumbers, pumpkins, squash and melons are all part of the cucurbit family. All can be grown vertically in containers. Grow cucumbers in at least 3 gallon container. Try “Patio Pic”, “Lemon”, “Saladin”, “Saladbush”, “Diva” or “Sultan”. Choose vining types of winter squash and grow on a strong trellis. A sling made from pantyhose or a mesh bag will cradle and protect developing fruit. Choose a 5 gallon container or larger. Best varieties for containers are “Sweet Dumpling”, “Little Gem”, “Autumn Glow”, “Table Queen” acorn squash and for pumpkins try “Jack-Be-Little”, “Baby Boo” or “Baby Bear”. For melons choose short-season variety muskmelons like “Fastbreak” muskmelon, or “Sugar Baby” watermelon, “Yellow Doll” melon, or “Minnesota Midget” cantaloupe. All cucurbits should be fertilized every two weeks.

Watering and Fertilizing

1. Pots dry out much faster than in-ground gardens. Check daily, and water whenever the top inch of soil is dry. Water in the morning so that plants have enough moisture to get through the heat of the day. Water deeply, until the water runs out of the pot.
2. Timing of fertilization is dependent on the type of vegetable.

Container Design

1. You can mix flowers with edibles. Group plants that like similar growing conditions in the same container.
2. Try Memories of Mexico, with tomatillo, jalapeno pepper, onion, and cilantro.
3. Bangkok Banquet could include sugar snap peas, Chinese cabbage, “Little Fingers” eggplant, Thai red chili peppers, lemongrass and garlic chives.
4. Viva Italia could include Roma or other plum tomato, sweet bell pepper, hot wax papper, Genovese basil and Italian parsley. Grow other herbs such as oregano, thyme and rosemary in a different pot as they prefer faster draining soil and less water.