

BIG IMPACT WITH CONTAINERS FOR SMALL SPACES

Present day gardens are like food portions in upscale restaurants... they are shrinking in size. However, you don't need to feel ashamed anymore with the size of your lot. From now on, I will not feel sorry for anyone who tells me - well I only have a ten by ten foot space so I can't really do anything. No excuses anymore. Everyone can grow plants in containers: roses, shrubs, perennials, annuals, vines herbs or even small trees. Gardeners are becoming adaptive to small spaces and nurseries are changing their products to accommodate the demand. Now flowers, foliage plants and even vegetables are able to grow in compact spaces. The best vegetables to try in containers are cherry tomatoes, garlic, lettuce and beets. Look for labels on the plant tags which say suitable for growing in containers.

Shopping for Pots

The first step in starting a container garden is to find pots. Not just any pot though. You will be seeing this pot every day so find something you love.

What type of container is right for you? Decide on what you would like to spend and how long you would like to have the container first. Synthetic materials like fibreglass make great containers that last forever and can be kept outside over the winter months. These are the most expensive; however, I highly recommend them especially for balcony gardeners. Concrete and stone containers are ideal for formal gardens or by your front entrance. Be aware, these containers are extremely heavy especially when filled with soil.

One of the best containers I have tried is an old wine barrel cut in half. The depth of the barrel is ideal for growing perennials. The wood continues to look better year after year.

Container gardening is one of the latest trends of the twenty-first century. One of the greatest benefits of containers is that plants can be moved from inside to outside. Some houseplants for example make great patio plants. Here are a few of my favourites

1. American Aloe (*Agave Americana*)
2. Parlour Palm (*Chamaedorea elegans*) and other species
3. Dracaena species (*Dracaena fragrans*, *D. marginata*)
4. English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)
5. Chinese Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*)

Dare to be Different

One of the great aspects of container gardening is that you have to experiment. Every season you can fill up the container with different plants that look wonderful in that season. Once a perennial becomes established in the container you can always transfer it to the garden. A great idea for a fall container is to combine dogwood branches, purple coloured chrysanthemums and English ivy. Just as gardens should be enjoyed all year long - so can containers. The possibilities are endless. Experiment with branches, different foliage, colours and textures as well as cascading plants that fall over the sides of the container.

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