

Container gardening is easy gardening. Just place a great big pot in partial sun where you'll enjoy it and where it's easy to water. Fill the top 15 inches with a good potting mix, choose plants suited to the sun exposure. Keep their mature sizes and colors in mind as you arrange them. Water them when they need it, and feed them a little time released fertilizer a few times over the season. It's that easy.

Now, let's consider one step at a time.

- 1) Choosing a pot: the bigger the better to reduce watering, heat stress and to make a bigger show.
- 2) Light weight pots are easy to lift and move. Whatever the container, it must allow free drainage. Holes in the bottom are a necessity.
- 3) Place the pot where watering will be easy and preferably in a spot with dappled sun or sun only part of the day. Keep in mind that placing a pot in sunshine against a brick wall will create a hot oven for the poor plants. Spacing out five feet or more will help and also provide better air circulation around the pot.
- 4) You can fill the bottom of the pot with some kind of spacer - an upside down plastic container or empty but capped water bottles, but leave about 15 inches at the top for potting mix.
- 5) Choose and place an arrangement of plants or one specimen plant, keeping in mind bloom color and mature size. One scheme for planting is the thriller, filler spiller method. A dramatic plant that grows tallest, the thriller, shows well in the center of the pot. Plants that surround the thriller are called fillers and provide color and depth. Around the outside edges of the pot, plants can cascade over the sides. These are the spillers.
- 6) After planting the pot, water thoroughly. Later, when the soil feels dry an inch or so deep, water again. When summer degenerates into a windy furnace of dry heat, the pot may need water once or twice a day.
- 7) Connecting a drip system controlled by a battery powered timer, can help, but nothing beats the digital detector—your finger inserted two inches into the mix.
- 8) If one plant in an arrangement fails, gently lift it out and replace it with one that will grow to a similar size.

- 9) At planting time and once in six weeks, sprinkle time-release fertilizer onto the surface of the mix. The granules will dissolve over time as you water the pot.
- 10) Evergreen boxwood shrubs can make a great potted plant and can be trimmed in interesting shapes as it grows. You can still add flowers around its base.
- 11) You can replace spring flowers in fall for pansies in the fall and water them through the winter for a great spring display.
- 12) Consider decorating the pot with a big pumpkin for Halloween cheer - either a natural one, or a lighted plastic one.
- 13) For Thanksgiving, add gourds and turkeys for Thanksgiving. In early December, you can plant spring bulbs, water add Christmas decor to the top of the pot. After Christmas, plastic evergreen branches with tiny lights woven among them will add a glow long winter nights.
- 14) In the spring, the bulbs will pop spring color to lift your gardener's heart. Add a bunny or two for Easter and you're all set.
- 15) Don't forget to add a few small flags for Independence Day.



