

Container Gardening

Container gardens are fantastic options apartment balconies, front porches, or for people who have little in-ground space to garden and want to decorate their yard with beauty and food in containers. This factsheet is a primer on getting you started growing healthy, abundant food and flowers in containers, paying special attention to types and sizes of pots, good quality soil, and choosing the right varieties of seed/plants to grow in containers.

Types of Containers

- Bigger containers are almost always better, as there is more soil nutrients and water available to plants, meaning that the plants will be healthier. Roots are also more insulated from temperature changes in large pots.
- Make use of containers you may already have laying around.
- Build a sub-irrigated bucket planter using factsheet #20. These planters use two 5 gallon buckets to allow plants to have constant access to water, plants love that!
- Containers can be plastic (retains moisture well), wooden (will eventually rot, perhaps more sustainable than plastic), burlap sacks (usually lasts just one year, easily available). All will work so long as they can hold soil and have a drainage hole or holes on the bottom. Be mindful of how heavy your planters are if you are gardening in containers on a balcony!

Start With The Soil

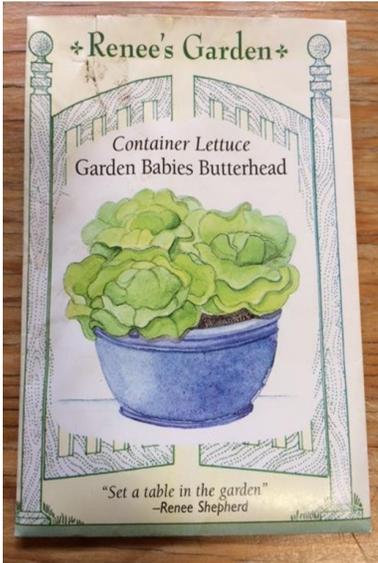
- Begin with an organic variety of potting soil. More soil and a bigger container is better, as there is more soil nutrients and water available to plants, meaning that the plants will be healthier.
- Mulch the soil surface with leaves or straw to support water retention (See factsheet #7 for more into)



A cayenne pepper plant in a sub-irrigated bucket planter



- Leave roots of plants in the container to decompose over the winter.
- In spring replenish nutrients in your pots with fresh compost and/or Sea Soil, ensuring that at least one quarter of the contents of the container is fresh compost.
- You can re-use your soil year after year, just ensure you are amending it with the aforementioned compost and/or sea soil.
- Decomposed leaves and grass clippings or composted manures can also be mixed into your potting mix
- For vegetables in containers, including 1 cup of a balanced organic fertilizer (like Gaia Green's 4-4-4) for every 5 gallons of soil, can ensure that your vegetable plants will have enough nutrition throughout the season.



Choose container varieties of lettuce

Best Plants to grow in containers

- Because of their small root systems or the fact that they produce a crop over a very long growing season, all of these plants grow well in a container: Lettuce, chard, kale, parsley and other herbs like basil, oregano, thyme and chives, determinant or container varieties of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, pole beans, strawberries, cucumbers and of course, flowers!
- Choose seed varieties that are container-specific if they are available

Watering Techniques

- Watering keeps plants alive, grants access to the nutrients in the soil, and prevents pests and disease. It's important!
- Containers will dry out quickly! If you have your container plants in a very sunny location and they are small pots, you may have to water twice per day. If you have a sub-irrigated bucket ensure you don't let the bucket dry out.



- Ensure your pot has good drainage. That may involve propping it up on something so that the drainage holes can freely drain of excess water.

Care during Growth

- Use visual cues to judge how healthy your plants are: Are the leaves dis-coloured? Is it growing very slowly? Is it not producing and fruit?
- If any of the above are true, then consider watering them with diluted Fish Emulsion Fertilizer and/or top dress the container with finished compost or Sea Soil.
- If your plant is always wilting, you may not be giving it enough water or watering it often enough.
- Don't forget to harvest your abundance of yummy veggies and



Use fish fertilizer mid summer if your plants need it



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Thank you to the City of Victoria for making this factsheet possible.