

# Container Gardens

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Agricultural Engineering Extension: Karen Funkenbusch, MA, and Willard Downs, Ph.D.

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Any vessel is suitable for container gardening if it has drainage - even an old boot will do if there is a hole in the sole. Drainage is to container gardening as location is to real estate. It's everything. The quality makes container gardening a good starting point for gardeners with disabilities. The major considerations given to container gardening are the size of the container, adequate drainage, and the requirements of the plants. Small containers such as ceramic pots and large institutional food cans can be placed on benches for accessibility. There are a number of commercially produced plant containers available, but wooden boxes, barrels, and even old bathtubs work equally well. The benefits of container gardening including the following:

**Mobility** - Containers are especially good because they can be moved around and even started indoors before the weather is warm outside. Containers can be moved...into the sunlight, out of the sunlight, the front yard, to the back yard, wherever you want. If you container plant start to wilt, don't worry. Just move it to a less-conspicuous spot.

**Flexibility** - Containers are great for small backyards, decks and apartment balconies or patios. Containers also let you grow plants that might not otherwise be suitable for your garden. Again, the container should be at a comfortable width and height for working.

**Protection** - The soil in containers warms up more and dries out earlier in spring than the ground, allowing you to plant ahead of schedule. Come fall, tender plants can easily be moved indoors.

**Additional Benefits** - To get the most benefit out of your container garden keep the following in mind. All container gardens will need more watering than a standard garden. A water source should be nearby. A short hose with a watering wand is easy to maneuver or use soaker hoses or drip irrigation in your containers. If you don't have a water outlet, use a lightweight plastic, not heavy metal, watering can. Mulching will also slow the evaporation of water from the planter and keep the soil cool for the plant roots. Certain varieties of plants are more appropriate for container gardens. Look for plants or seeds as compact, drought resistant or recommended for container gardening.

## Types of Containers

**Miniature Gardens** - Miniature garden planters can be constructed for persons in wheelchairs that allow a great deal of individuality in designing landscapes.

**Window Boxes** - Window boxes may be especially good for the individual who does not have an accessible outside area or is unable to work outside. Window boxes are usually made of wood but can be made of painted aluminum. It is important that considerations for proper drainage are given in the construction of the box. Plants can be directly planted into the soil in the box or pots can be put into the box to be removed in the winter months.

**Planting Bags** - Plastic bags of artificial soil mix specifically designed for culture directly in bag are now available from some garden centers and catalogs. Plant through slits in the side of the bag; water using a watering wand or long nose watering can to fit into the opening; and fertilize weekly. Planting bags can be placed on the ground, benches or tables of any convenient height. They can be easily moved from one location to another. Although the planting bags are temporary and relatively expensive, they can produce a small garden where other methods are difficult.

**Hanging Baskets** - Hanging baskets are not much different than any other container. However, their small size may require more frequent watering. Hanging baskets may be inaccessible to persons with limited mobility or strength, but a pulley system easily solves this problem. The system needs to be designed so that the rope and its attachment is accessible to any gardener who uses a chair or walker.

**Containers** - Containers are what most people picture when they hear, 'Container Gardening.' They can be anything from a standard clay pot, to something more creative like an old whiskey barrel.

For additional information contact your local Outreach and Extension Service or the University of Missouri-Columbia, 1.800.995.8503.

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