Container Gardening

Important to consider with container grown plants

- Wind and air movement
  - In very windy areas, use heavy pots that won't blow over.
  - Strong stakes for tall plants.
- Light
  - Most plants need 6-8 hours of sun, use pots that can be moved throughout the day if necessary.
- Water
  - Daily watering is necessary and be generous.
  - If soil becomes dry, water may run through, soak pot in a bigger pot to rehydrate soil.
- Containers
  - Consider size of plant and its roots, root veggies need a container twice the depth of the mature root.
  - Very deep containers can be filled with cans, rocks, branches with a layer of landscape fabric covering the filler before adding soil. Branches will slowly decompose over many years, they hold moisture too. (Hugelkultur)
  - Unglazed clay pots dry out quickly, and can crack during the winter, wood containers also tend to speed drying of the soil, rot is a problem, line with landscape fabric to decrease loss of soil through cracks.
- Nutrients
  - Frequent watering leaches nutrients from the soil, regular feeding with organic fertilizer important. Fish or kelp based fertilizer are diluted in water and can be used when watering.
- Temperature
  - Pots can get very hot in day long direct sun, make sure the plants can tolerate this, use light colored pots that won't absorb heat from the sun, insulate pot or shade from sun.
- Soil
  - Don't use soil from the garden, too compact and won't drain well
  - Buy a good potting mix. Pre moisten, and never let completely dry out (won't absorb water well)
- Plants that would like to be contained – tomatoes, ever-bearing strawberries, tender perennials, tomatoes, peppers.
- Plants that we like to contain – mint, horse radish, other herbs, these are invasive and pots sunk into the ground can prevent spread of these via the roots
- High rise buildings, insects needed for some plants (cucumber family) to produce fruit, make sure they can get to the plant

CONTAINER POTTING SOIL INGREDIENTS

Peat moss or coco coir is both great for water retention, aeration, and adding nutrients to the soil as they decompose. Peat moss is more acidic and natural sources are disappearing faster than they rebuild. Coir is the biproduct of coconut processing, a sustainable resource.
Compost or well composted manure is an easy and natural way to add important nutrients and beneficial organisms into the soil. It also helps to retain moisture.
Perlite is a natural ingredient that prevents soil compaction and adds drainage to container gardens. It is a naturally occurring volcanic rock formed from siliceous lava or ash.
Vermiculite is another natural ingredient that helps the soil retain moisture longer. It also works to keep the soil in planters light and fluffy, which helps with drainage and preventing compaction. **Vermiculite** is a hydrated magnesium aluminum silicate mineral which resembles mica in appearance.

Sample Container Gardening Soil Recipe

- 2 parts peat moss, coco coir (pre-moistened), or potting soil
- 2 parts compost or composted manure
- 1 part perlite
- 1/4-1/2 parts vermiculite

SUITABLE VEGETABLES TO GROW IN CONTAINERS OR SMALL SPACES

Beans, Beets, Broccoli, Carrots, Cucumber, Lettuce (cut and regrow),
Peas, Peppers, Radishes, Spinach, Tomatoes, Onions.

CONTAINER & PLANT SIZES

- **Small** plants (lettuce, spinach, salad greens, radishes, and green onions), 8 to 10 inches wide and at least 6 inches deep. In this size container you could grow two or three of your leafy greens and up to a dozen radishes or green onions.
- **Medium** plants (carrots(double depth for size of carrot), beets, peas, and beans 12 to 16 inches wide and at least 10 inches deep. Trellis peas/ pole beans, grow at back of rectangular container.
- **Large** plants (tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbages, broccoli, peppers, potatoes, or dwarf corn) , 16 inches wide and with at least 18 inches of soil to grow well, one/container, fill up soil surface with herbs/ lettuce/ etc. Use bush varieties of squash.

TIPS FOR CREATING A SUCCESSFUL CONTAINER GARDEN

- Dwarf Varieties These are vegetable plants that are smaller in size and therefore need less space to grow.
- Grow Vertical If you want to grow a lot of vegetables in less space such as snow peas, shelling peas, pole beans, cucumbers, and tomatoes.

- Grow early and late veggies in the same pot, either together when the early one will leave room for the late one to grow, or plant and harvest the early crop, add fresh soil and then plant later season crops.

Steps to create a container garden

1) Select an appropriate-sized container that has drainage holes for the plants you are growing.
2) Fill the container with potting soil to within an inch of the top of the container.
3) Moisten the soil and let it absorb the water before planting (lukewarm water will be absorbed faster than cold water).
4) You can plant several plants in the same pot (except very large ones like tomatoes or squash).
5) Set taller plants in the center of the pot and insert stakes prior to planting any other plants around the larger one. If you will be trellising plants, the larger ones can be placed at the back of the container so they will climb on the trellis, and others can be planted in front.
6) Water once the plants are in the soil; this will help to settle the soil, and the roots will get established more quickly.
7) Add more soil, if needed, after watering.
8) Keep the container moist and well fertilized Details on container veg:

Sunlight Requirements

- 4 - 6 hours of sunlight: Carrots, Lettuce, Kale, Peas, Swiss chard
- 6 – 8 hours of sunlight: Vegetables that traditionally need more sunlight and warmth are the ones that produce fruit.
- Minimum eight hours of full sun to grow best: Cucumbers, Eggplant, Peppers, Squash, Tomatoes

Take home message

No matter how large or small your planting is, it is most important to choose an area that will get the most possible sunlight, has good drainage, and reasonably good soil. This will ensure you will at least have some veggies to harvest.