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Container Gardening: A Simple Guide for Home Gardeners

Why Try Container Gardening?

If you haven't tried container gardening yet, now is the perfect time! Container gardening offers many benefits:

- No weeding
- Faster soil warm-up in spring
- Protection from unpredictable weather
- Better control over pests and critters
- Easier watering management
- Harvests right outside your door

Even with just a few containers, you can grow fresh vegetables, herbs, or flowers for your family.

Choosing Your Containers

Size Matters

Plant	Minimum Container Depth
Tomatoes, Peppers	18 inches
Lettuce, Radishes	4-6 inches
Carrots, Beets	10-12 inches
Herbs (most)	6-8 inches

Note: Some plants like corn are not good container candidates due to their size and growth habits.

Container Materials

- Unglazed Terra Cotta: Breathable but dries out quickly; great for herbs.
- Plastic: Lightweight, affordable, and works for most plants.
- Glazed Pots: Attractive but may retain too much moisture; check for good drainage.
- Wooden Containers: Durable and weather-resistant; suitable for all seasons.
- Specialized Growing Systems: Tower gardens, self-watering containers, and other systems are great for convenience.

Always ensure containers have drainage holes!

Choosing Your Soil

Use high-quality potting soil, not garden soil. Potting mixes are designed for containers and contain materials like:

- Organic matter for nutrition



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- Perlite or vermiculite for drainage
- Peat moss or coconut coir for moisture retention

Refreshing Your Soil

- Dumping it out in spring
- Removing old roots
- Mixing in 50% new soil or compost

Soil-Saving Tip

For shallow-rooted crops in deep containers, add filler to the bottom (like aluminum cans in plastic bags) to save on soil cost.

Watering: The Key to Container Success

Container plants dry out faster than in-ground gardens. Proper watering is essential!

Tip	Why It Matters
Water deeply and regularly	Prevents root stress and wilting
Check soil daily	Surface can dry out quickly
Use saucers carefully	Avoid water sitting under pots
Consider drip irrigation	Convenient for consistent watering

Container Material & Watering

Terra Cotta: Dries out fastest

Plastic/Glazed Pots: Hold moisture longer

Advantages of Container Gardening

- Mobility: Move plants inside or into shelter during cold snaps.
- Frost Protection: Easily cover containers in fall.
- Pest Management: Isolate affected plants and treat individually.
- Minimal Fertilizer Needs: Good soil reduces the need for chemicals.
- Space-Saving: Perfect for patios, decks, or small spaces.

Start Small & Grow Your Skills

Even just a few containers can provide fresh produce for small families or individuals. With container gardening, you can:

- Learn new gardening skills
- Enjoy homegrown vegetables and herbs
- Control your growing environment



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Need Help?

Visit Columbia Nursery! Our garden experts will help you select containers, soil, and plants for a successful container garden.