

CONTAINER GARDENING TIPS

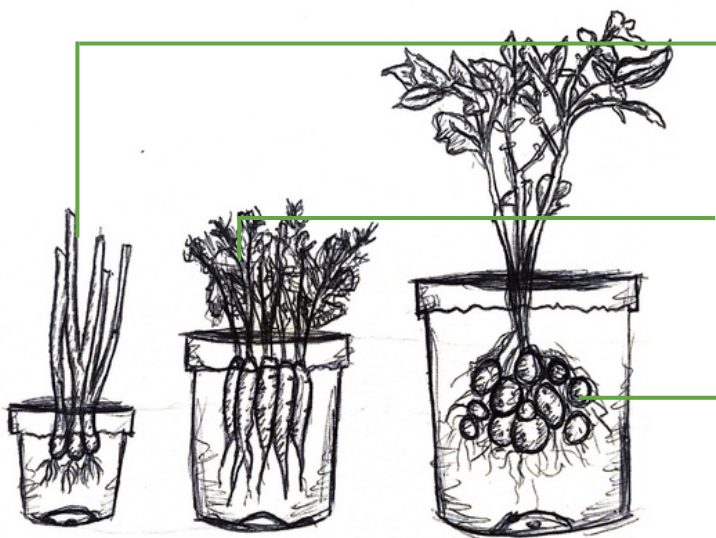
Gardening in containers can allow you to make the most out of limited green space.

Container gardening is a particularly popular option with apartment and condominium residents that have access to a patio or balcony. With the exception of large trees, almost anything can be grown in a container. Below, please find some tips to start your own container garden!

SITE MATERIALS & CONSIDERATIONS

SUNLIGHT: If possible, choose a site that receives full sunlight (six hours or more of sunlight a day). It is ideal to grow in south-facing locations. If your site receives fewer than six hours of direct sunlight, then you may consider growing plants that tolerate or thrive in the shade, such as leafy greens or herbs.

SPACE: When choosing containers for your plants, it is important to know the amount of space that your plant requires. You want a container that will be large enough to fit the plant's mature root system.



- **Shallow Roots:** 6-9" container depth for plants with shallow roots (chives, lettuce, green onions, spinach)
- **Moderately Deep Roots:** 12-18" container depth for plants with medium sized roots (eggplants, peppers, beets, carrots, broccoli, kale)
- **Deep Roots:** 18-24" container depth for plants with deep roots (tomatoes, potatoes, zucchini, winter squash, corn, cucumbers)



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DRAINAGE: Drainage is particularly important in container plants to prevent the roots from being overexposed to water and rotting. In order to ensure proper drainage, make sure that your containers have sizable drainage holes in the bottom. If your container does not have holes, you could drill drainage holes into the bottom.

POTTING MIXTURE: Due to the particular importance of drainage in container plants, we suggest using a porous potting mixture, such as an all-purpose potting mix that contains peat moss, vermiculite, and perlite. Potting mixes can either be purchased at your local retailer or you can assemble a mix using a few key ingredients, such as 1 part compost and 1 part garden soil. Adding perlite can be especially helpful for container plants because it is a specialized mineral that can improve drainage.

MAINTENANCE

WATERING: Watering practices for container plants will depend on your potting mixture. Most container plants will need watering once a week during the growing season if they are in direct sunlight and your soil drains well. However, plants that are in partial shade may need to be watered less frequently. As a general rule, you can water your plants when the potting material is dry to the touch. When possible, water your plants in the mornings to avoid mold and to sustain water throughout the day.



FERTILIZING: The composition of your potting mix and the types of fertilizer that you are using determines how often you will need to fertilize your plants. If you are using a slow-release fertilizer, one application per season may be enough. Compost is a soil amendment that can be incorporated into your potting mix, but compost contains lower quantities of nutrients so you may need to do several applications in a season. However, if you are using water soluble quick-release fertilizers, it is typical to fertilize plants around once a week.

Sources: University of Georgia Extension, University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schenectady County. Illustrations by Olivia Golden.