

# Gardening Basics

## Container Gardening

### Getting Started

Container Gardening is a fun way to jump-start any season with an instant “pop” of color in your garden. Urns and pots can be quickly transitioned from season to season. Planters filled with annual or perennial flowers or herbs make a perfect gift.

Some important basics and tips for getting started are:

- 1) Pick your container/planter,
- 2) Ensure proper drainage in your container,
- 3) Soil preparation and
- 4) Plant selection and color arrangement.

### Picking the Perfect Container:

Work with your existing planters and/or add new pots. There are countless planter materials and types, so determine your style, color scheme, and durability requirements. Porous planters such as clay and wood allow for great air movement for soil and roots and offer good drainage but may need winter protection as they deteriorate faster. Non-porous ceramic planters offer less air movement and are costlier, but they withstand frost and hold water longer. Unusually clever solutions include antiques, like troughs, wheel barrels, and buckets. Check out your storage areas for suitable items previously overlooked. Have fun creating a conversation piece for your space.

### Ensuring Proper Drainage:

Getting a planter with pre-existing holes for drainage is best, or you can drill holes in the planter base. Place either a mesh screen or coffee filter over the inside holes to allow for slower drainage and water retention. You can pass drip irrigation up through a hole to provide for effortless watering.

### Good Soil Preparation:

TIP: The most timely and important tip in this process is to place your planter in its location before filling it with soil. Fill your container 2/3 to the top with a store-bought potting soil mix that contains a time-release fertilizer and/or moisture retainer. Choose your plant selection according to the location- sun versus shade, and your chosen color and texture preferences.

### The Thriller, Filler, and Spiller Design:

If you are new to container gardening, a tried-and-true design concept incorporates 3 plant-type components: the thriller, the spiller, and the filler. A **“Thriller”** is a **tall plant** that, when placed in the center or towards the back, will anchor your planter. A **“Filler”** is a dense, prolific, and showy **medium-height plant** that will fill the bulk of your planter. Lastly, the **“Spiller”** is a **trailing plant** (i.e., ivy, sweet potato vines) that will gracefully spill over the sides of your planter.

Note: be sure to group plants based on similar needs for water and sunlight. Water your soil first, and then arrange plants so that all the root balls are touching each other. When the arrangement is to your liking, fill in the rest of the planter with soil and water again, and enjoy!

### Learn more about container gardening at these links:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. [Container Gardening — Vegetable Gardening in Containers](#)  
Oklahoma State University Extension. [Container Gardening](#)



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