



## guide to container growing

**Even if you don't have a large garden you can still grow your own vegetables and flowers in containers. Container gardening is an incredibly efficient way to utilise the space you do have, regardless of size. There are even innovative ways to grow plants vertically in pots or containers.**

**Use containers to grow your own vegetables, improve or update a tired corner of an existing garden, or add colour and fragrance to a balcony with potted herbs and flowers. Potted plants can also create a focal point in a small garden. Hanging baskets are also a fantastic way to add colour and charm.**

### Choosing the right plants

#### Vegetables

You can successfully grow many types of vegetables in pots or containers. Bigger veggies do need big pots but with container gardening being so popular, there are also many dwarf or mini-varieties now available. To get started, some lettuce varieties to try are "Tom Thumb", "Little Gem" and other red leaf varieties which grow well and look great. You can also grow dwarf tomatoes such as Roma or Cherry Tomatoes, as well as capsicum, cucumber, courgettes and Asian greens etc. Start planting summer vegetables around Labour Weekend, but just move pots to sheltered spots to limit the risk of late frosts. Winter veggies also do well in pots; plant them in late spring/early autumn. Position your veggie pots or containers in a warm sunny, north facing position, and away from strong winds. When growing veggies in pots, as with normal gardens, use succession planting to ensure you have a continuous supply eg. keep sowing seeds or planting seedlings every few weeks.

#### Herbs

With many herbs of Mediterranean origin, they are hardy and ideal for growing in containers. Try basil, coriander, dill, thyme, rosemary, chives, parsley, mint, sage, oregano and marjoram. It is beneficial to replant pots with new plants in spring.



#### Flowers

Flowers in pots are a fantastic way to liven up any garden or small space. You can create a seasonal garden in containers with flowering annuals which can produce mass displays of colour that look stunning. When it comes to annuals, you can't beat petunias in pots for the summer. Cosmos also look quite stunning and come in a range of colours – the dwarf whites are especially nice. Marigolds like the drier conditions of pots and flower right through summer. For potted perennials, plant old favourites, geraniums and pelargoniums. Daisies come in white, pink and yellow, and make a phenomenal display over summer while requiring minimum attention. Other summer annuals to try are; calendula, alyssum, lobelia, portulaca, and salvias. Winter annuals to add colour are; bedding begonias, pansies, primulas, sweet pea and violas.



Another very popular plant to grow in containers is Lavender. It is best to go with smaller varieties like Old English (angustifolia) which also has the most beautiful scent. There are other forms of the smaller growing varieties like munstead, and hidcote which also will do well in pots. Regularly dead head your flowers to ensure continuous flowering.

Bulbs also look stunning in containers and provide pops of colour and scent anywhere you place them. Over winter keep them at the bottom of the garden and transport them back to your porch or indoors when they begin flowering. Refresh the soil in pots and remove and check the bulbs every 3-5 years to ensure that the bulbs are still healthy and break up the big bulbs before replanting.

#### Trees, Fruit trees and Berries

There are many varieties of citrus and fruit trees which can be grown in containers to bring a mini orchard into your space. Try Meyer Lemon, Clementine or Encore Mandarin and Bears Lime as these all have a small compact form. Red Guava also grows very well in a container, as does Incredible Edibles® dwarf Feijoa Bambina. Other fruit trees that can do well are olives, figs and apples (on dwarf rootstocks).

Berry fruit like strawberries, raspberries and blueberries are ideal for growing in pots. Always apply a layer of mulch or pea straw on top to help moisture retention and stop fruit sitting on the soil, which can increase the risk of fruit rot.

You can also grow ornamental trees and shrubs in large containers. For instance, smaller varieties of Weeping Maple trees can look stunning. Always check with your local gardening centre that the variety you are choosing is suitable to be grown in a pot.

## Choosing the Right Container

Choosing the right sized container will help ensure your gardening success. When choosing pots or containers, consider; size, style, material, durability, and weight, including what you will plant in them. Choose a size that is suited to the variety of plant you wish to grow. For example, a potted tree will require a larger container compared to potted flowers or vegetables.

In terms of what type of container to grow in – you are only limited by your imagination! From stylish concrete or stone planters, terracotta or plastic pots, to up-cycled baths or even old teapots or gumboots! It depends on the space and look you want to achieve. Be sure the container has adequate draining holes so the plant roots do not sit in water and the base of the container is raised above ground level.

## Planting in the Container

Being in a confined space; potted plants deplete the soil more quickly of nutrients. Always use fresh, good quality mix such as **Daltons Premium Potting Mix** or **Tub Mix** or **Daltons Easy Lift Potting Mix** or **Container Mix** when replanting each season. These mixes contain essential well balanced, slow release nutrients and have moisture retaining qualities to help stop soil from drying out quickly. It is worthwhile adding a layer of mulch on top to protect the soil and keep moisture from evaporating.



## Fertiliser

While new container mix does include essential plant nutrients, supplementary fertiliser applications are beneficial for your container plants over a period of time.

Slow released fertilisers are recommended as they release nutrients with each watering, ensuring plants receive a regular supply of 'plant food'.

Fertiliser 'type' can depend on what is being grown eg. flowering plants prefer fertiliser with a high potash content, while foliage plants require higher nitrogen fertilisers.



## Seasonal Care

As containers often occupy a high profile part of the garden and create a point of interest all year round, seasonal care involves replanting and replacement of plants. Lightly pruning potted trees to maintain a nice compact form should also be done as required. To keep them looking their best, regularly clean any dried soil, dust or debris from the outside of your pots or containers.

## Watering

Water your pots two to three times a week thoroughly, rather than a sprinkle every night. It's important that plants do not dry out between watering, but don't over water them either. Adapt watering to growing conditions and individual plant species. Be sure to increase watering during the summer months.

If you go away, ask a neighbour to water your pot and containers or put them under trees where there is dappled light so they don't dry out as quickly.



## Hanging Baskets

Hanging baskets are a great way to decorate verandahs and entryways. For bigger and more vibrant plants select a bigger basket, to keep the roots cooler and increase water retention. Using a basket liner will also help with water retention in the soil. Try **Daltons Besgrow Spagmoss Liners**. All you need to do is mist the liners with water to soften them before inserting into the basket. After hydrating the liners with water, fill the baskets with potting mix and add plants to the sides and top of the basket. Make sure you water regularly to keep the baskets damp.



## Children's Container Gardens

Container gardening is an excellent way to encourage young children to garden by growing flowers and cultivating their own vegetables. Select containers that are the right size and height to allow easy access by the young children. To get them started, choose fast growing plants that are tasty to eat.

Strawberries are one of the most rewarding of plants for young children to grow – with delicious fruit for their hard work. Some vegetables to try are; cherry tomatoes (Tom Thumb or Sweet 100), radishes, peas (snow or sugar snap can be eaten pods and all) and beans. There are also many different salad greens to try; mesclun mix, spinach, rocket or kale. Teach children how to remove the outer leaves of butter crunch, oak leaf or cos lettuce to eat, so the plant keeps growing.



## Gardening Terms Explained

**Annuals** – Only lasts a growing season.

**Deadheading** – The removal of finished flowers to encourage continuous succession flowering.

**Hardier/hardy plants** – Robust plants that can tolerate severe conditions.

**Perennials** – Plants that live more than one growing season, usually two to three years or more.

**Replacement planting/or succession planting** – Planting the same plant again as the previous one comes to an end.