

Here's our best advice on CONTAINER GARDENING :)

Container gardens are great for dressing up your porch or patio, people who have limited space or not enough yard to plant in the ground, and for beginning gardeners! They can be planted with a single plant or a combination of plants depending on the look you are trying to achieve. Popular plants for containers include annual flowers, herbs, veggies, grasses and succulents. Many gardeners switch out the plants they grow seasonally to ensure nonstop color throughout the year!

Start by choosing the right container: The Green Thumbers has the largest variety of pottery in the Quad Cities!

- You can plant directly into any container so long as you create drainage holes. Drilling through wood, plastic or fiberglass is pretty easy. You can make a drain hole in a clay pot by using an electric drill, but be gentle!
- If you are investing in large containers, buy the BEST quality you can afford, so they will endure the outdoors. Go for classic shapes and styles that will fit in with any theme you choose.
- When choosing containers, use the materials and architectural details of your house as a starting point. For example: match warm brick walls with terra-cotta pots!
- A tall, narrow pot is less stable than a squat, low one. Use tall pots for trailing plants, which are not usually top heavy, and let them cascade over.
- If your planter is deep & wide, you can use a foundation type of plant (for example: boxwood), which will remain as your permanent base plant all year. Then play around seasonally with annuals, color & texture as filler & spiller. You can even add more height around the foundation plant as thriller!! You'll be amazed how many artistic & unique styles you can create to enjoy the same pot all year long!
- We carry an awesome product called an UPS-A-DAISY which sits in the bottom of your pot so you don't have to use soil all the way to the bottom in your larger, deep pots!

Choosing plants for your containers: Ask any of our experts here at The Green Thumbers to help you build the perfect planter! We have some great suggestions and advice, and we know what does well together!

Environment:

The #1 key to a successful container planting is to make sure that all of the plants require similar sun or shade conditions as well as water requirements.

Flowers vs. Foliage:

Don't rely on flowers alone. Long-lasting container combos tend to partner plants chosen for extended bloom time (usually annuals) with plants that add attractive foliage colors, leaf sizes & shapes, and textures to the mix (often tender perennials). Have fun with what you're selecting for the container—mix edibles & annuals, do something wild! Containers are also great to 'contain' those beautiful but 'bully-like' plants that would otherwise take over the garden in-ground.

Thriller, Filler, Spiller:

Don't choose plants that are all the same height, shape, or texture: One may be tall and upright (thriller); another, medium-high and mounding (filler); and the last, low and trailing (spiller), to soften the container's edge. Besides giving you aesthetic contrast, this arrangement avoids competition for light and space.

Color:

Here are a few guiding principles for the flower color wheel:

- Pinks, blues, and purples are nearly always compatible.
- Hot yellows and oranges work well with reds that verge on purple or brown.
- White and silver go with everything, as do very pale yellow and bright fresh greens!

Change your mind?

It's easy to add and subtract plants, even in mid-season. Using a long knife, cut a circle around the root mass of the plant you want to remove, pull out the cylinder of roots and potting mix, and plug in your newfound beauty. In a week or so, the replacement will look as if it had been in your container from the start.

How to plant your container: Keep in mind that we offer to plant for you! If you don't have the time or space to do it yourself, we offer planting as well as delivery straight to your door!

Planting mix:

Start with a peat-based soil mix, we suggest Fertilome Ultimate potting soil which includes peat & perlite and is a nice, all purpose loose mix... You can find that here at The Green Thumbers! If you struggle with pots drying out too fast, use HSU rice hull mix. When filling the pot with the mix, leave room for water—an inch or two between the soil surface and the rim of the pot.

Plant placement:

If the container is going to stand against a wall or fence, put tall plants in the back where they won't block light and air from shorter neighbors. If the container will be out in the open, place the tallest plants in the center.

Top dressing:

If you don't like the look of bare soil in pots, top dress around plant stems with gravel, chunk bark, attractive pebbles or some other quick-draining layer. This looks more "finished" and also helps retain moisture.

Container care & maintenance:

Water:

Remember that annuals and other plants will require more water in containers than in flower beds. The soil in containers dries out much faster, simply due to lower soil volume and less insulation, which allows the soil to heat up and moisture to evaporate quicker. Plants thrive on consistency, especially when it comes to water.

Fertilizer:

Nutrients are quickly washed out from the potting mix with all the watering that containers require. Plants do best with a steady supply of fertilizer, so we suggest doing two things. Use a slow release fertilizer and apply once a month, paired with a water soluble fertilizer that you will want to apply weekly. Using a combination of both will ensure that your plants never look tired!! :)

Deadheading:

Regularly snip off spent flower stalks and errant branches to keep your containers looking clean and healthy!