

Growing Vegetables in Containers



Containers and Pots for Vegetable Gardens

Selecting Containers: Containers for your vegetable gardens can be almost anything: flower pots, pails, buckets, wire baskets, bushel baskets, wooden boxes, nursery flats, window planters, washtubs, strawberry pots, plastic bags, large food cans, or any number of other things.

Drainage: No matter what kind of container you choose for your vegetable garden, it should have holes at the base or in the bottom to permit drainage of excess water.

Color Considerations: You should be careful when using dark colored containers because they absorb heat which could possibly damage the plant roots. If you do use dark colored pots, try painting them a lighter color or shading just the container.

Size: The size of the container is important. For larger vegetables like tomatoes and eggplants, you should use a five gallon container for each plant. You can grow these plants in two gallon containers, however you need to give the plants considerably more attention.

Soil and Fertilizer

You can use soil in your container vegetable garden, but the synthetic mixes are much better. Peat-based mixes, containing peat and vermiculite, are excellent. They are relatively sterile and pH adjusted. They also allow the plants to get enough air and water. Mixing in one part compost to two parts planting mix will improve fertility.

Using a slow release or complete organic fertilizer at planting will keep your vegetables fed for the whole growing season.

Watering

Pots and containers always require more frequent watering than plants in the ground. As the season progresses and your plants mature, their root system will expand and require even more water. Don't wait until you see the plants wilting. Check your containers daily to judge the need for water.

Tips for Growing Your Container Garden:

- Garden containers must have holes to drain from the bottom.
- Do not use soil from your garden for containers—it is too heavy and packs hard. Purchase potting soil or mix your own (1/3 soil + 1/3 peat moss + 1/3 vermiculite (or perlite or sand))
- Place containers where the plants will get 5 hours of FULL sun a day.
- Most vegetables can be grown in containers, except corn and pumpkins. Look for “bush” types of vining crops like cucumbers and squashes that can be grown in containers.
- It is important to fertilize your container vegetables.
- Water your plants when the top ½ inch of soil becomes dry. You may have to water everyday on hot summer days.
- Tomato cages can be used to support your tall and vine vegetables.

Vegetables Plants Suitable for Containers

Seed companies realize that homeowners have less and less space to devote to vegetable gardens. Every year they come out with new vegetable plant varieties suitable for growing in small spaces and vegetable container gardens.

Be on the look out for key words like: bush, compact, and space saver. Here are some vegetable plant varieties to get your vegetable container garden growing.

- **Cucumbers:** Salad Bush Hybrid, Spacemaster, Bush Pickle
- **Eggplant:** Bambino, Slim Jim
- **Green Beans:** (Pole beans give a higher yield in a small footprint) Blue Lake, Kentucky Wonder, French Dwarf
- **Green Onions:** Beltsville Bunching, Crysal Wax, Evergreen Bunching
- **Leaf Lettuce:** Buttercrunch, Salad Bowl, Bibb
- **Peppers:** Frigitello, Cubanelle, Sweet Banana, Apple (Hot) Red Cherry, Jalapeno, Robustini
- **Radishes:** Cherry Belle, Scarlet Globe, (White) Icicle
- **Squash:** Ronde de Nice, Gold Rush
- **Tomatoes:** Patio, Pixie, Tiny Tim, Saladette, Toy Boy, Spring Giant, Tumbling Tom, Small Fry

Containers for Gardens—and where to find them!

Cement blocks—construction or renewal sources
Baskets—fruit markets
Five-gallon plastic pails—fast-food chains, restaurants, bakeries
Garbage cans—recycle bent ones
Crates—fruit markets, grocery stores
Buckets

