



# Container Gardening



Photo Credit: Lowe's

*Shallow containers are perfect for smaller crops like:*

*lettuce, salad greens, spinach, Asian greens,  
radishes, scallions, and herbs.*



Photo Credit: Red Cedar

Try growing  
potatoes in a  
burlap sack!

*Tall containers are perfect for larger,  
fruit-bearing crops like:*

*tomatoes, eggplant, sweet and hot  
peppers, beans, and peas.*

*Or root vegetables like:*

*carrots, beets, onions, and potatoes.*



Photo Credit: Grow-It-Organically

## Container Gardening Basics

Even the smallest patio or porch is enough to grow a variety of vegetables and flowers in containers. The container gardener is limited only by their imagination!

### Container

Containers can be made of plastic, wood, metal, stone, clay, or ceramic. The size and number of plants to be grown will determine the size of the container used. Deep rooted vegetables require deep pots, 5 gallons or larger. Smaller plants will grow well in shallow tubs, or containers smaller than 5 gallons. Containers must have holes in the bottom for drainage.

### Soil/Growing Mixture

Your growing medium must remain loose, drain well and yet stay moist, and be able to hold nutrients for plant growth. Use an all-purpose commercial potting soil or mix. An organic potting soil or mix is preferable. Do not use regular soil taken from your yard or garden. It is too heavy for the roots to grow, and might contain contaminants. You can add some compost to the potting soil, as it contains organic matter and nutrients, and retains water well. When you add potting soil to the container, leave 2 inches of space between the top of the soil and the top of the container. This leaves room for watering. You may add ½ inch of mulch, if desired.

### Sunlight

Plants need at least five or six hours of direct sunlight each day, and many plants will benefit from even more. As a general rule, herbs and leafy vegetables such as cabbage and lettuce can tolerate the most shade, while root crops such as beets and carrots will need more sunlight. Fruiting vegetables such as tomatoes and cucumbers need the most sun. Be aware of light availability when you first place your container as they can be difficult to maneuver, however, containers can be shifted throughout the day to optimize sunlight.

### Watering/Drainage

Plants in containers dry out much faster than plants grown in the ground. Water plants thoroughly (until water runs out the bottom of the container) whenever the soil feels dry to the touch. This could be more than once a day during the summer. Avoid allowing the soil to dry out excessively between waterings.

Make sure your pot has adequate drainage. Line the base of the pot with newspaper to prevent soil loss and set containers on bricks or blocks to allow free drainage.

### Fertilizer

If planting in potting soil, check if it contains fertilizers like fish emulsion or seaweed. If not, add fertilizers. Consider organic options like the two mentioned above. Compost is another option, as it contains a good balance of organic materials, microbes, nutrients and trace minerals.

### What to Grow?

Small salad greens such as lettuce and spinach, cooking greens and root vegetables such as beets, radishes, carrots or onions can be sown directly into the soil. You may be able to get several crops of a quick maturing vegetable like a lettuce, spinach, or radish from your container in one season. Fruiting vegetables, including tomatoes, peppers or eggplant can be easily grown in containers. Try planting quick-growing small herbs and leaf lettuces around larger fruiting vegetables.