



Helpful Hints for Successful Container Gardening

- Anything that can hold soil and has at least one drainage hole (2 to 3 holes are better) can serve as a planter. Often “found” unconventional items make excellent pots.
- When using pots that have contained other plants, you may want to use a 10% bleach solution to disinfect your container and tools. This solution is active for 20 minutes, its best not to store the solution.
- Large containers retain more moisture than small ones. This is especially true with hanging baskets. Grouping containers together is an attractive way to display potted plants.
- Use soil-less mix for containers. Commonly known as potting soil, there is no soil in this mix.
- This soil less mix provides good drainage for containers.
- Leave 1” freeboard space in container to allow for even water penetration.
- When water starts to run through the container without wetting the root ball container mix should be changed. It can also be refreshed to bring it back to the freeboard.
- To facilitate wetting peat moss, add a drop or two of dish soap to the water.
- When making a hanging wire basket that is lined with moss, place a shallow saucer close to the bottom and inside the basket to hold some water. Otherwise, the container dries out too much and water tends to run through.
- Container plants must be rated at a lower temperature than your plants in the soil. If your temperatures reach no lower than 20 degrees, you should choose plants that will accept at least 15 degree temperatures. Plants in containers get colder than plants in the ground – they also get warmer in the direct sun.

- At 86 degrees and higher, temperate zone plants do not grow. They just pump water to stay alive and survive the heat.
- **The most important rule – group plants together that have like requirements – water needs and exposure preferences.**
- Never fertilize plants when they are dry or stressed.
- Controlled release fertilizers such as Osmocote as activated by heat at 70 degrees. They are dormant in cold weather.
- Once your plants have filled in and you want to stop vigorous growth, stimulate bloom but not growth with a soluble 0-10-10 fertilizer applied weekly.
- When using single plants in a container, use a container size that fits the plant at the time and move to larger pots as the plant grows.
- **Herbs and vegetables** do well in containers either mixed with ornamental plants or by themselves. Just remember to plants with like needs together.
- **Tomatoes** grown in containers require at least a five gallon container.
- Large plants in containers can serve as a much needed focal point when there is little else to catch the eye.
- Double potting conserves water and reduces heat stress on roots. It all begins in the roots.
- **Recipe for making Sierra College outdoor container potting media:**
10 parts ground fir bark to 1 part sharp builder's sand.
Add time released fertilizer to mix as directed on fertilizer label. Mix with water to moisten.
- *Reference: Sierra College Container Gardening Class Handout*