

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL CONTAINER GARDENS IN THIS VALLEY

By Cecile Garrison, UC Master Gardener

There are six basic elements for a healthy, long living container plant:

1. The container should be at least 16” in diameter. Roots frequently accumulate next to container walls. To help insulate the plant try double potting with soil between the two pots. The container must have good drainage. It should fit the plant and allow for at least one year of growth.
2. Choose drought tolerant plants. Ornamental grasses can take our summer heat and so can Succulents. Invasive plants such as Mint, Oregano and Mexican Primrose are easier to control and look great in containers.
3. Water is Life! You should start with moist potting soil because it is very hard to moisten it after planting. Don’t let the soil dry completely between watering. If it does, then submerge the container in a tub of water and wait for the bubbling to stop, then allow the water to drain out. I use a \$5.00 moisture meter to determine when to water. Be prepared to water daily during the summer and part of the spring and fall. Don’t let containers sit in water.
4. Purchase a good commercial potting mix preferably one with a long acting (and lasting) fertilizer. It should be light and fluffy, absorb water, and drain well. Garden soil is too heavy and may contain disease organisms.
5. Six hours of morning sun is enough sunlight for most plants to perform at their best, then give them some shade in the afternoon. Even tough grasses and succulents would benefit from protection, when our afternoon temperatures are over 100 degrees.
6. Feed your container plants more often than those in the ground. They will need nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. There are fertilizers specifically sold for container plants. Read directions carefully. Do not over fertilize! Fertilizer dissolved in water becomes a salt. When the water evaporates the salt is left behind. This can damage the roots, plants don’t look as good, and plants are more susceptible to attack from insects and disease.



This information courtesy of:
The Master Gardener Program of Tulare & Kings Counties
University of California Cooperative Extension
Have a gardening question? Call anytime and we will return your call.
Tulare: (559) 684-3325 & 684-3326 Hanford: 582-3211 ext. 2736

