



Garden Notes

GN 140

VEGETABLE CONTAINER PLANTING TIPS

Why do we plant in containers? It is fun! Containers are the perfect solution when we have limited time, space, little sun, poor soil and/or root competition.

Containers

- You have many choices: clay, wood, plastic, stone, metal and wire in all sizes and shapes.
- Make sure the container has room for the plant roots. Containers should be a minimum of 18 to 24 inches wide and 12 to 16 inches deep.
- The container must have good drainage holes, ½ inch or larger. Use a concrete or masonry bit for glazed or unglazed pots.
- Place a wire screen, newspaper, weed barrier cloth, coffee filter or cheese cloth over holes.
- Light colored pots will not heat up as much as dark colored pots when exposed to the sun.
- Wine barrels' metal rings need to be secured from below with a screw.
- Disinfect and wash used containers with a bleach solution of 9 parts water to 1 part bleach. Always wash in mild soap and rinse well with water.
- Line wire baskets with sphagnum moss or drop-in liners made from cocoa fiber, burlap or polyester. Plastic bags can be used if holes are created for drainage.

Potting Mix

- Potting mixes supply the roots with nutrients, air, water and physical support.
- Use a potting mix, not soil from your garden or landscape.
- Some potting mixes contain fertilizer and/or water holding polymers.
- Adding homemade compost will impart microbial action and nutrition but may add soil-borne diseases.

Type of Plants and Planting Times

- Select plants with compact growth habits. Compact plants are often labeled "bush" or "dwarf".
- Plant warm season vegetables at the end of April or in early May: beans, cucumbers, eggplant (plants), peppers (plants), potatoes (end of February), summer squash, tomatoes (plants)
- Plant cool season vegetables in August: beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, chard, green onions, kale, lettuce, peas (September plants), radishes, spinach (September)
- Refer to Environmental Horticulture Note 11, *Sacramento Vegetable Planting Schedule* for additional information on recommended planting times.
- Examples of varieties suitable for container growing:
Tomatoes: Husky Gold, Super Bush, Tumbling Tom, Patio, Pixie
Carrots: Scarlet Nantes, Gold Nuggets, Little Finger, Thumbelina

Care – water and fertilizer

- Vegetables need at least 6 hours of sun a day.
- Raise planters off of hot cement with plant trivets, wood or bricks.
- Prior to watering, press finger into soil to tell if it is dry.
- Water until excess water drips out the bottom.
- Containers need to be watered more often than plants in the ground.
- Protect your plants from temperature extremes.
- Mulch the soil surface to keep down weeds and to help soil and roots stay cool.
- Fertilize every other week with half-strength liquid solution.
- Follow label directions for application rates of granular fertilizer. Water thoroughly after applying granular fertilizer.

Irrigation methods

- Hand water or use a low volume system connected to a timer/valve.
- Numerous low volume options are available. One option includes the use of drip line and adding:
 - ¼ inch spaghetti tubing with drip, bubbler or micro sprayer emitters
 - ¼ inch slit tubing with end cap
 - ¼ inch inline emitters

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