



Garden Notes

GN 123

CONTAINER GARDENING TIPS

1. Container gardens can be decorative (walkways, entryways, window boxes) or utilitarian (growing herbs, vegetables), or both! Annuals, perennials, bulbs, shrubs, and small trees are options.
2. In our Sacramento climate, remember that the heat and dry air affect plants in containers more than those in the ground.
3. Consider the sun or shade exposure for your container, and plant accordingly.
4. Keep pots off hot cement with plant trivets, pieces of wood, or pot “legs.”
5. Select pots no less than 6” across.
6. All pots need a drainage hole in the bottom.
7. Clay pots should be submerged in water for 5-10 minutes before planting in them. Clay pots are porous and will dry out more quickly than glazed ceramic, wood, or plastic.
8. Glazed ceramic pots are heavy. Wood pots will eventually rot out. Plastic pots are fragile, and thin. Metal pots conduct heat and are not desirable for Sacramento summers.
9. To save your back, plant the pot in its final location—pots filled with soil are HEAVY.
10. Use commercial potting mix, not garden soil. Potting mix is actually contains no soil. Garden soil compacts in the pot, making it too difficult for the roots to reach water, air and nutrients. Commercial mixes usually contain some fertilizer, but check the contents.
11. A recipe for potting mix is: 2/3 cubic yards nitrogen stabilized ground bark, coir dust or peat moss, 1/3 cubic yard washed 20 grit sand, 6 lbs. 0-10-10 granular fertilizer, and 10 lbs. dolomite. Mix together in a wheelbarrow.
12. To pot your plants, fill the container with potting mix until you reach the depth of the plant container plus 1-2 inches. Water the mix thoroughly, and let the mix settle. Then place the plant in the new pot, and fill around it with the potting mix. Water thoroughly again.
13. Plants in containers basically have their roots exposed so they dry out faster than plants in the ground. They need more frequent (but slow and thorough) watering.
14. Frequent watering leaches nutrients out of the soil, so fertilize the plants with a balanced fertilizer about every 2 weeks.
15. Stick your index finger into the soil to test for moisture—if it is dry, it is time to water.

Reference: SUNSET GARDENING BOOK

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