

GARDENING IN SMALL-SPACES

A GUIDE TO GREEN CITY LIVING

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Tip: Container gardens don't have to be started from seed. For an instant container garden, simply purchase seedlings from your local garden store and transplant into your desired containers.



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Don't have a yard or garden? No problem! With the proper love and care, most plants that grow in a garden will do well in containers. Using only a few basic materials, you can grow food indoors, on balconies, or on windowsills. The most important thing is to be creative!

What You'll Need

Containers

Potting mix (available at your local garden supply store)

Seeds or seedlings

Watering can or bottle

Setting up Your Container Garden

- 1. Sanitize** – Use an environmentally friendly all-purpose cleaner to scrub your containers, then rinse and dry before planting.
- 2. Ensure good drainage** – It's crucial that your pots have adequate drainage to prevent drowning the seeds and plants. Make sure there are holes in the bottom of the container. Improve drainage further by adding a layer of rocks (or broken terra cotta/ceramic pieces) in the bottom, before adding soil on top.
- 3. Plant** – Water the soil beforehand so that it's moist upon planting. Fill container with moist potting mix, leaving about an inch at the top. Plant seeds according to directions on the seed package. Cover with a thin layer of soil.
- 4. Water** – It's important to keep your seeds moist while germinating. Use a mister or spray-bottle so you don't overwater.
- 5. Position** – Most herbs and vegetables like a good deal of sun. Position your containers where sun exposure is maximized. There are some varieties that prefer a little shade—be sure to check the seed packets for each plant's ideal growing conditions.

To Feed or Not to Feed?

Seeds are fully equipped with everything they need to sprout. The first two leaves you will see are called "seed leaves," which will eventually shrivel and die upon arrival of the first "true leaf." Once this happens, it's time to start feeding your seedlings. Compost and worm castings are highly nutritious natural soil amendments that can be gently mixed with water and sprayed onto the top layer of soil (use worm castings sparingly—a little will go a long way). If using regular fertilizer, apply half-strength liquid organic fertilizer every week.

Tips and Tricks

- Choose the right mix—garden soil is generally too heavy, and will hold excess moisture in pots, drowning the roots. Planting mixes should be porous and free-draining. Potting soil is your best bet.
- Check containers often, especially during periods of extreme heat—containers typically dry out more quickly than a garden bed. It's best to water in the morning, and only when the soil feels dry to the touch 3 cm (2 inches) below the surface of the soil. Letting your plants dry out between waterings will help the plant roots grow longer, stabilizing the plant.
- As long as they share similar growing requirements, different types of plants can be grouped in one container.
- Train plants to grow vertically using a trellis to save space. A trellis can be bought ready-made, or constructed from a variety of materials. Be sure the scale of trellis fits the size of the pot, and install the trellis before planting so that you don't disturb the roots.
- Change the potting mix every year. By the time the season is over, all the nutrients in the mixture will have been used up. Recycle used potting soil in your compost or work it into existing flower beds.
- Some seeds like lettuce can be sprinkled closely together to grow a lush container of greens that can be harvested continually.

Container Sizes for Small-Space Growing

Plant	Depth of Container (Min)
Basil	20 cm/8 inches
Beets	25 cm/10 inches
Broccoli	25 cm/10 inches
Brussels sprouts	25 cm/10 inches
Cabbage	20 cm/8 inches
Carrots	20 cm/8 inches
Chives	20 cm/8 inches
Corn	30 cm/12 inches
Cucumber	20 cm/8 inches
Eggplant	23 cm/9 inches
Lettuce	10 cm/4 inches
Peas	15 cm/6 inches
Pepper	20 cm/8 inches
Potato	50 cm/20 inches
Spinach	20 cm/8 inches
Squash	20 cm/8 inches
Strawberry	25 cm/10 inches
Tomato	25 cm/10 inches



Some veggies to try in containers:

Carrots, Cress, Lettuce, Mustard, Radishes, Spinach, Tomatoes, Zucchini, Beans, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Corn, Cucumbers, Peppers, Potatoes, Squash, Tomatoes, Turnips, Beets, Carrots, Celery, Chinese Cabbage, Cucumbers, Spinach, Onions.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Canadian Gardening www.articles.canadiangardening.com/gardens/container-gardening

Garden Guides www.gardenguides.com/685-guide-container-gardening.html

You Grow Girl The Groundbreaking Guide to Gardening. Gayla Trail. Fireside Publishing. 2005.

McGee & Stuckey's Bountiful Container

Create Container Gardens of Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits, and Edible Flowers. Rose Marie Nicholas McGee and Maggie Stucky. 2002.

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