

The Art of Window Box & Container Gardening

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Commentary

This book is a complete guide to how to choose and grow any variety of plant or flower for window boxes and other containers. Growing plants in containers and window boxes is a versatile and simple way of adding extra interest to any garden. Even if the space available for planting is very small, for example on the balcony of an apartment, favorite plants can still be grown and an enjoyable and impressive display created. In such cases simple window boxes can be made a great feature, hanging baskets packed with colorful annuals can be used to enliven walls or doorways and pots, tubs and sink gardens can even provide a means of growing home produce such as herbs, small vegetables and strawberries. Additionally, in larger gardens, where space is not at a premium, container planting can be used to great effect to relieve large areas of paving or gravel, and can also make an ideal flexible display for patios and terraces [1].

Growing plants in containers as a number of advantage over ordinary garden planting. Weeds do not present a problem nor is any heavy cultivation of the soil required. Additionally, species that might not normally do well in the garden can often be successfully grown in containers instead. Very tender plants such as palms and orange trees, can be grown in quite cold climates provided they are brought indoors during the cold winter months, and, as the growing medium can be easily tailored to a plant's specific needs, plants unsuited to the soil found in the garden can still be grown.

Conventional containers for plants can be found in all shapes and sizes, ranging from simple flower pots, window boxes or hanging baskets to large tubs, half-barrels and very ornate vases. But almost any receptacle can be pressed into use provided it can hold some compost and has drainage. Diffused chimney pots, sewage pipes, old wheelbarrows and even a pair of old boots have all made unusual and interesting containers for growing plants. Window boxes are a great way of brightening up and adding interest to an otherwise plain facade. There are also an ideal means of increasing the planting area in situations where space is extremely limited.

There are so many different types and styles of plant containers available that there is almost no limit to the variety of display that can

be achieved by the container gardener. There is a huge selection of free-standing containers available, ranging from the simple flower pot to large troughs or ornate urns, and more specialized containers made for specific situations, such as hanging baskets or wall pots, for example, or containers for growing particular kinds of plants such as strawberry pots or potato barrels. Once the container is chosen it must be filled with compost and planted up. It is not worthwhile to economize on the growing medium as this has a direct effect on plant growth and the routine containers as it compact less than ordinary garden soil, is guaranteed sterile and weed free and can be more easily tailored to suit the specific needs of particular plants.

There are a great many plants that can be grown in containers; therefore, when choosing which plants to grow one is confronted with a bewilderingly large selection. When choosing plants for a containerized display the cultural requirements of the plants must be taken into account, as well the usual considerations such as flower color, shape and size. Few plants will flourish if they do not receive the growing conditions they prefer. It is always a great thrill eating really fresh, home-grown produce and quite a range of useful crops can be grown in containers. Many are also ornamental and make attractive container plants in their own right. For more ambitious schemes a large variety of herbs, fruit and vegetables can be grown but if space is limited it is perfectly possible to grow a selection of herbs, or salad vegetables quite easily in a kitchen window box, perhaps only an arm's length away from the table. The yields obtained from container grown fruit and vegetables will generally be smaller than can be achieved in the open garden, but nevertheless the quality of the crops will be equally as good, and perhaps even better. Correct watering and feeding is absolutely vital to ensure good health and vigor of container plants. But there is more to container care than just watering and feeding, attention paid to regular deadheading, pruning, re-potting and protecting more tender specimens from frost in winter will pay dividends in plant health and quality of display.

References

1. (1996) Tiger Book International, London p: 144.

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