

STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL CONTAINER GARDENING IN WEST TEXAS

Location

Decide where your container will be placed. How much sun will it receive a day? In our hot West Texas climate almost all plants benefit from some shade during the hot afternoons and many plants will perform nicely in dappled shade. Will it be a single container display or grouping? Unless the pot is the true focal point, groupings often look nicer. Will it be on or near a concrete wall or patio? These areas will be hotter and drier and will need more frequent watering.

Plants

Now that you know where you are going to place the container, you need to pick the right plants. Group plants that need the same requirements as the area your container will be in. Beware of plant that will grow to big for the area or too slow to fill it in. If you are planting perennials, choose ones that are hardy to one zone colder than your region (Lubbock is in Zone 7) and they will be able live all year in your containers. Annuals can be placed close together to provide instant impact. Give perennials some room to grow but plant closer than you would in the garden.

Container

Now you've got your location and plants picked out what will you put them in. When choosing a container, bigger is better. The larger the container the more water it can hold, which means less frequent watering. Deeper containers do not dry out as fast and have more room for roots. Even though we want to conserve water, make sure that the container has good drainage. Very few plants enjoy sitting in soggy soil. The material the container is made out of is a personal preference. Plastic and glazed pots retain moisture better than unglazed terracotta and wood, but plastic degrades quicker. Large concrete planters will last a long time but are difficult to move.

Soil

Now what to plant them in. Choose a quality soil-less potting mix, we love Berger Potting Soil. Add Soil Moist, a water retaining polymer, and Osmocote, a time-release fertilizer, to the potting mix.

Water

Container gardens require less water but more frequent watering than plants planted in the ground. Depending on where the pot is placed, some may require daily watering, while others may only need watering every other day. Use mulch to help retain moisture. Mulch can also help dress up a pot while plants are filling in.

Maintenance

Make sure to deadhead as the season goes on to get the most flowers out of your plant. Most plants will benefit from continued applications of a water soluble fertilizer, such as Miracle Grow, about once a week or top dressing of Osmocote in the mid summer. Perennials in containers will need to be removed about every other year to divide them, trim their roots and replant them.



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