

Town Gardener

Container gardening allows flexible methods

By TOM CAVAN
Container Gardening

Container gardening is the most flexible method of gardening. This method of growing plants allows you to grow just about any plant in any location providing your plant choice is compatible with the location or locations you pick to accent.

You cannot break all the rules. Strong consideration must be given to container size and soil type. How much exposure it will receive? Essentials like watering and fertilizing must be realized in order to be successful. If you haven't purchased your container but wish to start sun and heat will determine the proper container. Too small a container will heat up prematurely, wooden containers insulate the soil and they are best suited for hot areas and the larger the container the cooler the soil. Better results will be achieved by watering your container before the heat of the day. In shady areas clay pots are my first choice because they are porous. This porosity will prevent over-watering and their earth tone colour sets a natural scene. It is important that your container has proper drainage so that during heavy rainfall your prize petunias don't float away. One good downpour could ruin your containerized garden if the

excess water is not easily drained from the pot. Good water drainage, even moisture retention and a balanced diet of fertilizer to supplement that small soil area are the key components to blue ribbon status.

I would recommend a soilless mix for all hanging containers because they are much lighter than your garden soil. In the case of larger containers you must empty the old soil out each year otherwise you will not keep up with the Jones. You can get away with removing the top half and amending the soil with sterilized soil. Good soil management is the foundation for success in a container garden. If you let the soil deteriorate your display will follow suit. Soilless mixes are more expensive but they provide excellent drainage and air movement for good root development and good availability of nutrients when you fertilize due to the controlled PH and the perfect balance of peat, vermiculite, perlite. The newer blends of soilless mixes are now adding about 10 per cent pasteurized soil to add an even better balance of soil medium for container gardening. If using garden soil in your mix you should mix equal parts of peat moss and black soil (loam) to enrich the soil medium and cut out any potential problems, if the soil appears heavy

after mixing I would recommend you add perlite until the soil feels loose in your hands and not compact or too heavy. This is not an easy judgement call for the rookie gardener so don't be afraid to ask for help when preparing your first container garden. The addition of crushed stone is helpful if your container is suspect in its ability to drain off excess water due to shape of container or if the drain holes appear too small.

When fertilizing a container be sure that the plants have had at least two weeks to root in, or a minimum of four waterings before adding any water soluble. Fertilizing amounts are determined by the vigour of the plants in the container. The more vigour they grow the more food they will demand. The less vigour the less food they require, so don't feed until the plants show good growth. If the plants don't take off immediately allow the containers to dry between waterings and only water before the heat of the day. Watering at night will soften plants and make them more susceptible to problems.

Even though the chances of another frost are slim you should still address the fact that the plants need to be climatized to their new location. The first two weeks are crucial to slowly introduce them to sun and wind.

Hanging baskets are the most flexible because you move them at a moments notice.

Container gardening is for everyone and everywhere. You are not limited to flowers either. Vegetables and especially herbs


are regaining popularity because you can extend your growing season and harvest dates are no longer premature. Mid-season

If you have any questions on container gardening call the Grapevine Hotline at 833-2117.

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Better Business Bureau warns of job scam

The clean-up of the Gulf War has prompted more job opportunity schemes in want ads, warns the president of the Better Business Bureau, Paul Tuz.

"The Bureau has been overwhelmed with the number of calls received from eager job-seekers who want to find out more information about ads which promise jobs in other countries. We are certain this is due to the increase in our unemployment levels coupled with the fact that working abroad, especially in war-ravaged Kuwait, may be perceived as an adventurous and lucrative opportunity," Tuz says.

Jobs in Kuwait may be enticing to some Canadians, adds Tuz, but he warns that unskilled workers

in Kuwait could be receiving as low as \$1.50 an hour and many local Arab workers are likely to be hired first.

The job ads often promise high pay and great benefits to people with little experience or training. The Bureau reports that job seekers responding to some "Rebuild Kuwait" or "Jobs in the Gulf" ads are told there will be fees simply for more information, jobs lists or resume preparation. Such lists can merely be information acquired from telephone books and newspapers. The Bureau reports some ads require up to \$500 from the applicant for this information.

"A true job offer would not require applicants to send money.

Any company promising jobs overseas has no authority to issue visas or work permits," Tuz says.

The Bureau warns these latest advertising schemes are similar to the usual empty promises of jobs in Australia, New Zealand and other overseas countries, and advises job seekers to check with consulates or embassies about prospects for overseas employment. To apply for job opportunities in the Gulf, the Bureau advises callers to write to Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program Office, Third Floor, 1510 H Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

For further information: Paul Tuz, Better Business Bureau (416) 766-5744.

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CONTEST POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER PIONEER DAYS Contest will continue Wednesday, June 19/91.