

Container Gardening Offers Design Freedom and Versatility

If one striking plant in a single pot can do wonders to brighten a window sill, take a moment to imagine the impact of a stylized line of matching plants or a cascading mixture of flowers and foliage on a landscape dominated by brick and concrete, a dull yard or a blasé balcony. Just about any location, big or small can benefit from well-placed window boxes, pots or planters.

Gardening in containers

also provides the added benefit of allowing you to tend to each plant's individual needs and even add or subtract plants at will. Grouping plants in separate pots is the simplest way to create a display. Mixed-flower or foliage arrangements in a single large planter require more forethought when planting, but offer a bunch of creative possibilities. For example, although soil mix tends to dry

out less quickly in large pots, it is very important that all of the plants grow at a similar pace and have similar requirements for sunlight, water and food.

Most herbs make ideal container plants. Herbs are fairly easy to grow, their aromatic leaves add gently spiced scents to window sills or patios. Fruits and vegetables demand more time and care, but are no less wonderful to have around. Following are a few more helpful hints for growing herbs, fruits and vegetables in containers.

Fruit

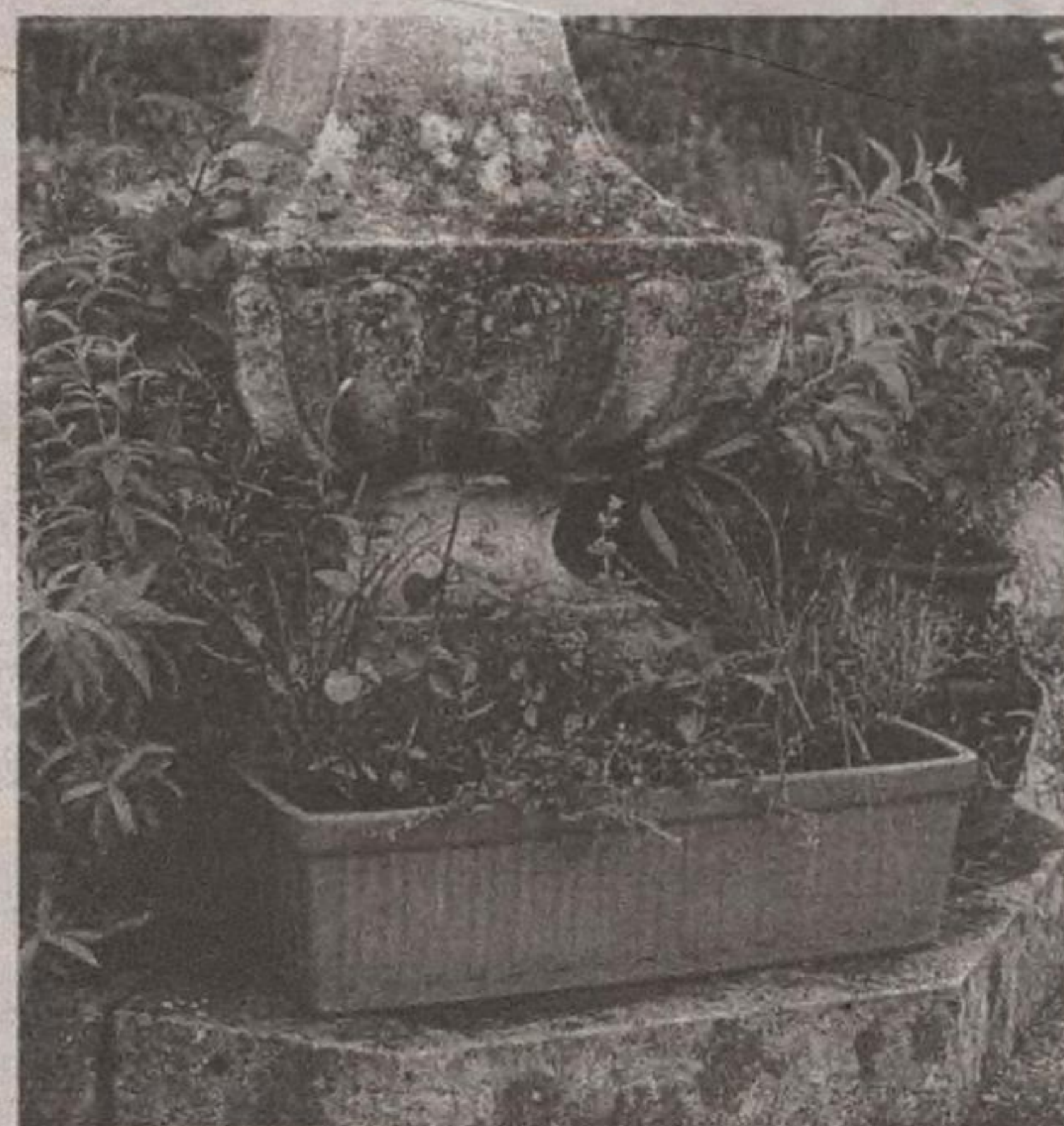
Generally, fruit in containers can be included in an ornamental garden design more easily than vegetables. For example, you can create a Mediterranean look on a sunny deck or patio by growing figs and citrus trees in pots, although they may need to be protected during the winter in a green house or conservatory. (Tip: In cool climates, citrus trees will be ornamental rather than productive.)

Consider what kinds of containers will best suit what you want to grow. Fruit trees need large containers that can hold enough soil mix to act as a buffer for roots in dry conditions. Strawberry jars, for example, are a decorative, space-saving way to grow strawberry plants. Regular watering is essential while fruit is developing.

Vegetables

The best vegetables for containers are shallow-rooted, compact, quick-maturing varieties. To create a mini-collage effect, plant more than one type of vegetable in a single, large container, combine for instance, a frilly-leaved lettuce like "Lolla Rossa" with feathery-topped carrots. As a bonus, growing a combination of plants can help ward off pests, which are less attracted to mixed scents than strong, single ones.

For a little fun with a sunny, sheltered corner, try some of the colorful varieties of eggplant and peppers. They are tender and need a long growing season to pro-



'Contained' doesn't mean 'confined' when it comes to gardening in containers. Just about any location, big or small can benefit from well-placed window boxes, pots or planters.

duce anything worthwhile, but many seed suppliers offer an exciting range, sometimes as small plants.

Herbs

The greatest advantage of planting herbs in pots is that you can easily position them in a convenient spot on a window sill or near to the house. Placing an herb container by the back door, for example, will allow you to water the plants and gather foliage easily.

Be sure that mixed species chosen for the same pot all enjoy the same conditions.

Many herbs are of Mediterranean origin and require plenty of sunshine and good drainage to thrive and survive wet winters. Thyme, marjoram, rosemary, basil, bay and sage all need sun, which also improves their flavour. Rosemary and bay need shelter, too. Chives, parsley, chervil and mint grow well in light shade; give mint a container of its own or it will overtake its neighbours. Suitable potting mixtures include a soil/peat mix or a soilless mix. For Mediterranean herbs, add some sharp sand.

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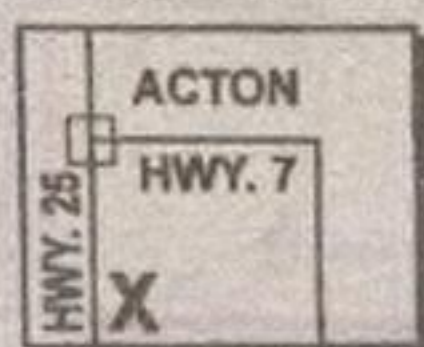
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Garden-Inspired Poetry For Kids to Enjoy

A child's imagination and thirst for knowledge are areas you should encourage as a parent. An excellent way to stimulate young minds is through literature and poetry which can be enjoyed at a picnic under spring skies or during quiet time when play for the day is through.

As you prepare your garden beds for beautiful blooms and keep the lawn healthy and green, entice your child's knowledge of the world to grow beyond the walls of the house by sharing garden-themed poetry.

This piece called "The Gardener," by Robert Louis Stevenson is just one of several enchanting verses for children.

The Gardener

*The gardener does not love to talk,
He makes me keep the gravel walk;
And when he puts his tools away,
He locks the door and takes the key.*

*Away behind the currant row,
Where no one else but cook may go,
Far in the plots, I see him dig,
Old and serious, brown and big,
He digs the flowers, green, red and blue,
Nor wishes to be spoken to.
He digs the flowers and cuts the hay,
And never seems to want to play.*

*Silly gardener! Summer goes,
And winter comes with pinching toes,
When in the garden bare and brown
You must lay your barrow down.
Well now, and while the summer stays,
To profit by these garden days
O how much wiser you would be
To play at Indian wars with me!*