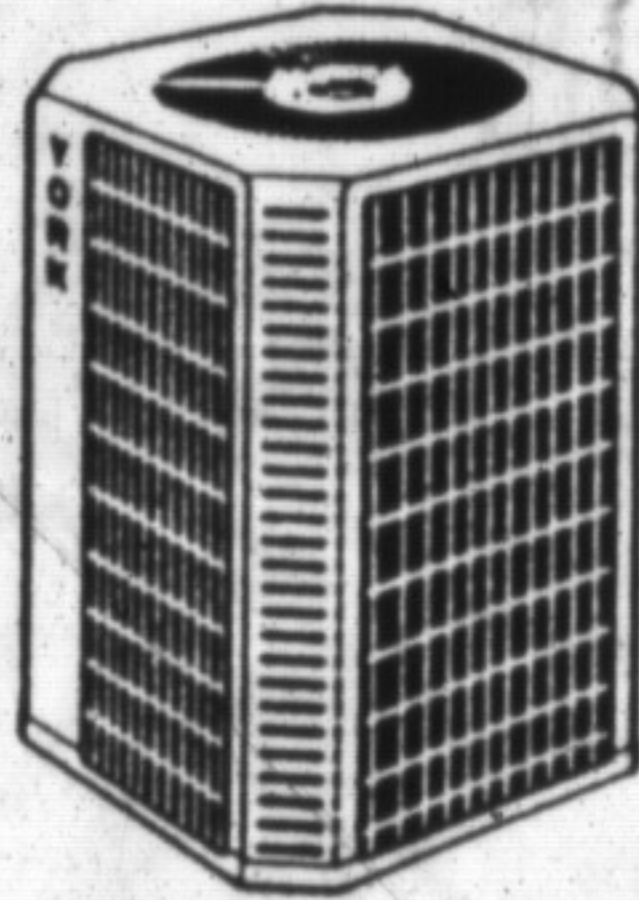


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## Container Gardens Create Instant Color

Container gardens overflowing with colorful annuals are the perfect decorative accents. Set them on a porch, patio or apartment terrace, or use them to create a colorful welcome at the entryway to your home. All you need are started annuals, a pretty container and a potting mix designed for container gardening. The materials are available at any garden center.

### Easy To Grow Annuals

The container gardens pictured here contain red geraniums, purple and white petunias, yellow and orange marigolds, purple lobelia and white sweet alyssum. These are undemanding annual plants that bloom all season long in a sunny location.

Other sun-loving annuals for containers are ageratum, cosmos, salvia and zinnias, and your garden center may offer more. For container gardens in shady spots, try impatiens and tuberous begonias.

When creating color combinations, adding a little white here and there will make other colors seem even brighter.

To arrange started plants in the containers, place the tallest growing ones in the center (note mature heights on the tags accompanying each flat of plants) and work down toward the edges with the shortest plants around the outside rim. Hang trailing annuals and vines such as vinca or ground ivy over the sides for an attractive effect.

### Choosing a Container

Whether you use a clay pot, an old coffee can or an antique Chinese porcelain bowl, the key elements are ample space and good drainage. Smaller containers — under 8 inches in diameter — are suitable for dwarf annuals and other plants that tend to stay small. Any container you use



Colorful container gardens to brighten a porch or patio are simple to make. All you need are a pretty container, started annual flowers and a potting mix designed for container growing. This gardener is using Fisons Sunshine PLUS, a peat moss-based mix which is extremely light and holds water and nutrients well.

should have a minimum depth of four to five inches to allow enough room for root growth. If the container isn't already provided with drainage holes in the bottom, you may be able to make holes using an electric drill. Otherwise, provide a drainage layer at the bottom of the pot consisting of an inch or so of garden sand. Be careful when you water a container that has no drainage holes as it can flood easily.

### The Proper Potting Mix

The secret of healthy container plants is in the potting mix. The best mixes for this purpose are based on Canadian sphagnum peat moss, which holds water and nutrients at proper levels but allows

for excellent drainage and air circulation around the roots. A good choice for annuals in containers is Sunshine Potting Mix PLUS, either the All Purpose or the Planter Box Mix. Both provide the perfect environment for healthy growth and are very forgiving if you should happen to water too much or not enough.

### When To Water

How much and how often you need to water will depend on the size and material of your container, its location and the weather. A good general rule is to keep the soil just damp to the touch — like a squeezed-out sponge — but never sopping. A large container in a sunny

Continued on page 7

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