

## **Container Gardening**

### **No matter how large or small your outdoor living area is, container gardening is your perfect opportunity to get creative!**

Even the smallest patio or porch can boast a vegetable, herb, butterfly, or annual garden that will enhance your space with color and fragrances. Container Gardening is perfect for softening your outdoor hardscapes (patio, deck, pool surround, etc.), providing dramatic entrances and transitioning your interior and exterior living spaces. The container gardener is limited only by their imagination.

*Consider the following guidelines when choosing your container:*

- Avoid containers with narrow openings.
- Containers should be weather proof and frost proof for year round displays.
- Terracotta pots dry out rapidly and need to be watered more frequently than glazed ceramic pots which are excellent choices but require several drainage holes.
- Depending on what you're planting, use containers between 15 and 120 quarts capacity. Small pots restrict the root area and dry out very quickly. The size and number of plants to be grown will determine the size of the container used. Deep rooted vegetables require deep pots.
- Make sure your pot has adequate drainage. Holes should be 1/2 inch across. You can line the base of the pot with newspaper to prevent soil loss.
- Setting containers on bricks or blocks allow free drainage.
- Line hanging baskets with sphagnum moss for water retention.

#### **Growing Mixture**

Make sure your planting soils drains rapidly but retains enough moisture to keep the roots evenly moist.

Use soils that are made for container gardening. These soils are formulated to allow for proper container gardening drainage.

Mix "soil moist" into the soil to assist in the proper hydration of your plants.

Add a slow release fertilizer into your soils, this will assist in the health of your plants.

When you add soil to your container, leave a two inch space between the top of the soil and the top of the container. You will be able to add 1/2 inch or so of mulch later.

#### **Sunlight**

When designing your containers with plant material make sure you consider where your container will be located in relation to the sun. If your container will be in full sun make sure you only fill it with plants that can handle full sun. The same is true for containers that will be located in shade: only shade loving plants should be planted.

#### **Watering**

In an exposed location, container plants loose moisture quickly. Some plants will need to be watered daily, especially during hot, dry weather, "soil moist" will aid in the hydration of your container plants. To avoid over watering make sure that water is never standing in the pot. Nutrients will leak out of the pot with every watering, be sure to add slow release fertilizers when planting and add liquid fertilizer as needed.

## **Container Design**

When designing your container make sure you keep in mind complimentary colors, textures and heights. The container should have a focal point that has height. Keep in mind the surrounding plants should vary in shape, surface and size.

You can use many types of plants in your containers ranging from annuals, perennials, grasses, vegetables, herbs and shrubs. Don't be afraid to mix and match each of these to give you the desired look for your outdoor living space.

There are endless combinations and configurations for your container gardens. Keep in mind that only your imagination can limit what you can do. For additional help on what to plant in, what to plant and how to care for it, just ask one of the many Southern Homes & Gardens professionals on staff at either of our locations.