

How to Grow Plants in a Window Box or Container

Equipment

- A selection of plants or seeds
- Compost
- Watering can
- Hand forks and trowels
- A suitable container



Plant Selection

An enormous range of plants can be grown in containers, from bedding plants and shrubs to herbs, vegetables and small trees. If you are intending to grow your container plants from seed first have a look at our fact sheet- How to grow plants from seed.

But if you are stuck on exactly what to grow here are a few ideas to get you started.

Spring Bulbs

One of the most uplifting sights is that of the first green shoots breaking through the earth after a long winter. So why not consider some spring bulbs for your container. Things like crocus, tulips, daffodils and hyacinth are ideal.

Flowers

During the spring pansies can offer some pretty colour and as the weather warms and summer comes geraniums, petunias, phlox (particularly dwarf varieties), lobelia, snap dragons and nasturtiums are just some flowers that can make a lovely colourful display.

Fruit and Vegetables

There are many varieties of apple tree that can be grown in a container. You will need to select the variety carefully as some can have problems with pollination. So it is worth getting some advice from a specialist supplier.

Strawberries grow well in containers and are best planted in late summer for cropping the following year. They can be grown in containers with holes around the side for additional plants. They will need plenty of water and will also need to be fed regularly in spring and summer.



A wide variety of vegetables can be grown in containers. These include tomatoes, beans, peas, lettuce and courgettes. Our salubrious salad bed has been specially designed for all summer round salad crops. Potatoes can also be grown in a barrel or bag. Have a look at our easy to use potato growing kit for more ideas.

Culinary herbs are also ideal for container growing, and several small plants can be grown together in one large pot or window box. Our salubrious salad bed is also ideal for growing herbs. It's worth noting that herbs generally require well-drained soil and a sunny location.

Several herbs including parsley, dill and basil need to be sown afresh each year. Mint, sage chives and rosemary will grow year on year, but are best protected from winter frost. Mint is also a very vigorously growing plant and needs to be planted in a separate pot to prevent it from taking over the other herbs.



Suitable Containers

There are a wide range of containers available for plants. They include tubs, troughs, pots and urns and can be made from wood, plastic, stone or terracotta. Or you might be able to adapt something you already have such as an old boot, bucket, bowl, chimney pot or wheel barrow.

Many plants will also grow in a hanging basket. These are particularly nice for trailing flowers such as fuchsias, but are also suitable for some varieties of trailing tomato. Hanging baskets do dry out quickly in warm weather so be prepared for regularly trips with the watering can. It's also best to try to position them out of strong winds as this will also dry them out very quickly.

How to Plant Up A Container

- (1) Select a container that is going to provide sufficient room for the plants in it to grow.
- (2) Make sure that the container has some drainage holes in it.
- (3) Place a layer of stones or broken crocks at the bottom of the pot to allow for good drainage. It is also a good idea to raise the pot a little off the ground.
- (4) Fill the pot to around two thirds full with some moist compost



- (5) Transplant plants carefully into the container and try to keep the roots as intact as possible. Don't squash plants up in an attempt to fit too many in.
- (6) Gently position the plants in place and fill the surrounding area with compost
- (7) Gently pat down the compost, leaving an inch or two of space at the top of the pot for watering
- (8) Remember to feed the plants regularly during the growing season.



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