

Container Gardening Vegetables and Herbs

If you don't have space for a vegetable or herb garden, or if your outdoor space is unsuitable, consider planting a container garden. Almost any plant will grow in a container when you provide the proper conditions. The main considerations are:

1. How much sun is available? Most vegetables and herbs need at least 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight daily. Leafy vegetables, such as lettuce, onions, carrots and beets will do okay in partial shade. Herbs tolerating partial shade include cilantro, dill, catnip, chives, marjoram, and mint.
2. What type of container? Any type of material is suitable, but plastic will retain more water than terra cotta. Make sure your container is large enough for your plant to develop a good root system. The container needs an adequate number of drainage holes in the bottom and should be elevated an inch or two. Dark-colored containers absorb more heat than light-colored ones and heat can damage the root systems.
3. Potting Media. Do not use garden/top soil! Use a high-quality potting soil. Put a 1 to 2 inch layer of gravel or packing peanuts in the bottom of the container to allow water to drain.
4. Fertilizing is a must! Two to four weeks after planting begin applying an organic or water soluble fertilizer mixed half strength. Continue to apply every two to three weeks unless you supplement the soil with a slow release fertilizer. Organic gardeners can use fish emulsion, liquid kelp, dried blood or bone meal. Do not overfeed – a little is good, a lot is not better!
5. Watering. All containers dry out quickly. To be safe, check containers daily. Stick your finger into the top 2 inches of the soil – if it feels dry, water until some runs out the bottom of the container. Water early in the morning to avoid wet leaves at night. A little mulch on top of the soil will help retain moisture.
6. What to plant. To get the most out of your space, choose high yielding and dwarf varieties of vegetables. Remember that tall or sprawling vegetables have extensive root systems (eggplant, peppers, squash, and tomatoes) and will bear well if they have enough room for roots. Don't crowd your vegetables or herbs when planting.

When planting an herb garden in a container, keep herbs with the same moisture needs together. You can take the container indoors in the fall and place it in a sunny window where it can be harvested until the plant runs out of energy and sunshine. Johnson's carries many varieties of vegetables and herbs suitable for your container garden.

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