

Container Gardening at the Miller Botanical Garden

The secret to lush, abundant growth lies in consistent watering and fertilizing of the containers.

1. Water tips: Check container daily to see if they need water. If they do, water thoroughly. The smaller the pot, the quicker it will dry out.

2. Fertilizer tips: The type of fertilizer doesn't matter as much as the diligence of applying it. Do so according to the instructions on the label.

20-20-20	Use every 3 to 4 weeks. Mix with water.
0-10-10	Encourages bloom. It is recommended alternating with a fertilizer that includes nitrogen.
Osmocote	Apply once when planting. Releases slowly over 3 to 4 months when soil temperatures are warm.
Others	Balanced, all purpose fertilizers work well: Rapid Grow, Miracle Grow, etc. (follow directions)
Bulb food	Use according to directions when planting bulbs.

3. Three-Dimensional Containers: Create full, lush containers by selecting plants with varying growth habits to provide height, fullness and a draping effect within the container.

Ingredients Needed to Plant a Container

1. Container: This is a good opportunity to exercise personal taste. Any container will work as long as it has good drainage. Remember that the larger the container the less frequently it will need watering. Use a 14" diameter or larger for the best displays.

2. Soil: A professional mix is recommended. Take into account the type of plants you have chosen. Some plants prefer better drainage, in which case you may want to use an alpine mix. Rhododendrons really need great drainage so it is wise to use a courser mix with these plants.

3. Color Decisions: Monochromatic (one color), blends of related colors, and accents of different colors. Consider leaf color as well as flower color. Also remember that white and yellow attracts the eye in shade, at night and on cloudy days while dark colors may tend to disappear in the same conditions.

4. Plant Ideas:

Light:	Sun or shade Mix plants that like a similar exposure.
Growth:	Habit and height of plant (this will help determine spacing and placement)
Color:	Look at both foliage and bloom colors for their impact on the container
Texture:	Leaf size, shape and density. A diversity of shapes and textures are just as important as color.
Hardiness:	Make sure the plant can tolerate temperatures colder than your microclimate. Soil in pots will reach much lower temperatures and can damage tender roots. Root hardiness is often about 10 degrees less hardy than shoots

5. How to Plant: Start first with the center, or tallest-growing plants. Work your way from the tallest plants to the edge with smaller plants.

Once the plants are taken out of their growing containers, if you see a wall of roots around the sides or bottom of the soil, gently massage or tease apart roots before planting.

Space a plant far enough from the next plant so that it has the room it needs to grow.

6. Care: Success depends ultimately on the consistent care the plant receives. Watering and regular fertilizing is the key to lush containers. Fertilizing should be stopped by mid August for pots containing woody plants.