



Edible Container Gardening

Limited space? Unsure about your soil quality? Pot it up!

Crop Selection

Almost anything can be grown in a container if given the right attention and space, but some edibles will thrive better than others.

Crop	Minimum Container Size	Light	Water ♣ - ♣♣♣	Plant Alone?
Blackberries: Natchez (thornless); Arapaho, Kiowa, Ouachita (upright)	5gal (wide & shallow)		♣♣	✓
Blueberries: Premier, Climax, Tifblue	15gal (use rose soil or add peat moss)		♣♣	
Peaches: Bonanza Mini	15gal		♣♣	
Banana: Ice Cream, Raja Puri, Dwarf Cavendish	15gal		♣♣♣	
Citrus: Satsumas, Kumquats, Calamondin, Limes, any dwarf varieties	15gal		♣♣	
Beans	2gal (3" apart)		♣♣	
Beets	2 gal (3 plants)		♣♣	
Broccoli	3gal (1 plant)		♣♣	
Cabbage	3gal (1 plant)		♣♣	
Carrots	1gal+ (2-3 plants, use pots 2" deeper than carrot length)		♣♣	
Collards/Kale/Chard	3gal (1 plant)		♣♣	
Cucumber	1gal (1 plant; trellis is best)		♣♣♣	
Eggplant	5gal (1 plant)		♣♣	
Lettuce/Greens	1gal (2 plants)		♣♣♣	
Melon	5gal (1 plant; trellis or give room)		♣♣	✓
Okra	3gal (1-2 plants)		♣	
Onion	2gal (3 plants; can plant in clumps)		♣♣	
Peas	2gal (3" apart)		♣♣	
Peppers	5gal (1-2 plants)		♣♣	
Potato	15gal (1-2 plants; can use burlap sack!)		♣♣	
Radish	1gal (3 plants)		♣♣	
Summer/ Winter Squash	5gal (1 plant)/5gal (1 plant; trellis or give plenty of room)		♣♣	✓
Tomatoes: Patio and cherry tomatoes work best	5gal (1 plant)		♣♣	

Herbs	Minimum Container Size	Light	Water ☔ - ☔☔☔	Plant Alone?
Chives	1gal (1 plant or 10-15 seeds)	☀️☀️	☔☔☔	
Cilantro	1gal (1 plant or 10-15 seed)	☀️☀️	☔☔☔	
Dill	1gal (1 plant)	☀️☀️	☔☔☔	
Parsley	1gal (3 plants)	☀️☀️	☔☔☔	
Mint	1gal (1 plant)	☀️☀️	☔☔☔	✓
Oregano	2gal (1 plant)	☀️☀️	☔☔	✓
Basil	1gal (1-3 plants)	☀️☀️	☔☔☔	
Rosemary	2gal (1 plant)	☀️	☔	
Thyme	1gal (1 plant)	☀️☀️	☔	
Lavender	2gal (1 plant)	☀️	☔	
Sage	1gal (1 plant)	☀️☀️	☔	
Fennel	1gal (1 plant)	☀️☀️	☔☔	
Lemongrass	1gal (1 plant)	☀️	☔☔☔	✓

Growing Media

Well-draining, loose, fertile soil, preferably with lots of organic matter.

Recipe 1:

1 part compost
1 part peat moss
1 part perlite/vermiculite

Recipe 2:

1 part compost
1 part perlite/vermiculite
1 part finely shredded mulch

These recipes can be adjusted depending on your preferences. I often add a little extra compost to increase the fertility and organic content. In our heat, moisture retention is key.

Lady Bug Vortex is a great all-in-one organic soil.

Worm Castings are great to mix into any container or raised bed for a fluffy, more organically-rich soil.

*If you're reusing old soil, or refreshing an existing container, make sure to add more organic matter-- mix in 25-50% fresh compost or humus.

Containers

Get creative here – almost anything can be a container!

Most common containers:

Plastic – inexpensive, lightweight / not porous, can heat up in the sun

Terra cotta – dries out faster, porous, better airflow, relatively inexpensive

Glazed Ceramic – more attractive, non-porous, more expensive but more durable

Raised Beds

Think of these as very large containers.

Raised beds should be 6-10" deep, by at least 3' x 3' for vegetable gardening.

If you build your own raised beds, use untreated lumber or cinderblocks. Layer cardboard before you add soil to act as a bio-degradable weed block.

Why Raised Beds?

Plants with access to the native soil are often stronger and more productive, while raised beds provide superior drainage and allow you more control over the quality of the soil.

Fertilization

Liquid or solid that provides nutrients to plants.

Dry – Usually a slow-release to be fed at time of transplanting and once every 2-3 months.

Great dry/granular fertilizer:

MicroLife 6-2-4 or **8-4-6** – Use ¼ - ½ cup per 5 gal pot; work into top 2" of soil.

Liquid – Foliar feed or soil drench usually used every 1-2 weeks.

Seaweed: Contains micro-nutrients and vitamins that keep plants healthy, green and lush.

Molasses: Filled with nutrients and an excellent **Chelating Agent** (this means it helps convert nutrients into a form that's easily available for organisms and plants to use).

Great liquid fertilizer:

John's Recipe 3-1.5-2 (Hydrolyzed and Emulsified Fish, Seaweed, Medina Soil Activator, Humic Acid and Molasses) – Mix 1-3 Tbs per gallon in a watering can or sprayer and use as a soil drench or a foliar feed (on the tops and undersides of leaves)-- or both!

Don't forget to add **Dolomite Lime** to your tomatoes and peppers to prevent blossom end rot!

Light

Most vegetables require full sun (6-8 hours of direct sun per day)

- Especially fruiting plants – tomatoes, peppers, citrus, eggplant, beans, corn, squash)

Some edibles will still perform well in part sun or full morning sun (approx. 4 hours of direct sun)

- Leafy greens and cool season crops – arugula, lettuce, chard, kale, collards

Watering

For containers, watering in the summer should be a daily task!

Best options: Hand watering, drip irrigation, soaker hoses

Remember: containers dry out much quicker and more fully than plants in the ground.

Soak the root ball well and allow to dry out somewhat between watering – this takes practice!

Water the container until you see water run freely from the base.

Plants often wilt in the heat and from drought stress. If a container has gotten 'bone dry' it may take a few days of monitoring before it can re-establish adequate moisture levels. If a plant has gone bone-dry, drench the soil 2-3 times, then continue with a regular watering schedule.

Tips for when to water: Lift the pot – is it heavy? Feel an inch or two into the soil – is it dry?

Harvesting

Greens and herbs – Continually harvest throughout the season, taking up to 1/3rd of the plant.

Fruit & berries – Pick off the plant when they look good enough to eat!

Tomatoes – Heirloom varieties can be picked 'at first blush' and allowed to ripen inside.

Root crops – Feel around the soil to see how wide the root is; can usually keep in ground until needed.

Pest Control

Ants – Ants love containers as much as you do, especially when you've made a nice lightweight, oxygen rich mix! **If you find ants in your container, use a soil drench of horticultural molasses and/or orange oil.** It's also a good idea to keep planters raised slightly off the ground.

Stink Bugs – Get a shop vac and suck them up! Cut a branch crowded with nymphs over a bowl of soapy water so they fall into it. Plant sunflowers at the back of your garden as a trap crop.

Aphids – Aphids tend to hang out on the new growth near the top of plants. Usually a strong spray of water will dislodge them. If this is not enough, **use diluted dish soap and water** spray early in the morning or late evening, or spray with a horticultural oil. Natural enemies: ladybugs and lacewings!

Caterpillars – Look for them when you see holes and hand pick off your plants. You can also spray them with diluted dish soap and water or horticultural oil. Natural Enemies: wasps, praying mantis and birds!

Predatory (Good) Bugs: Ladybugs, Assassin Bugs, Praying Mantis, Lacewings and Wasps

Division

When perennial plants outgrow their containers you have a few options...

1. Transplant them into a larger container
2. Divide them and replant into the original container with additional soil
3. Prune the root ball and add fresh soil (leaf prune as well if you use this method, i.e. 1/3 roots, 1/3 plant/leaves)

Plants you can expect to divide or root prune often: oregano, mint, lemongrass, lemon balm.

Container Gardening Success

Check plants regularly! Hand watering gives you a chance to look closely at the plants, so you can catch pest, disease and nutrition problems early.

Experiment with planting different things together...

Remember to plant like with like!

Plants that like drier soils and full sun should go together, plants that like more moisture or part sun grow together.

A few examples of exceptional, edible and enticing container plant combos:

- Lavender, Rosemary, Thyme and Sage
- Basil, Cilantro, Parsley and Chives
- Peppers and Nasturtium
- Tomatoes and Marigolds
- Annual herbs with fruit trees
- Salad Greens/lettuce and part sun herbs

