



Master Gardeners of Essex County
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Master Gardeners of Essex County



A unique group of trained volunteers who provide horticultural programs and services to enhance their communities in Essex County. The MGEC:

- *cares for the Butterfly Garden at the Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange, New Jersey*
- *provides educational outreach throughout Essex County.*
- *offers gardening help to all residents through the Rutgers Master Gardener Helpline*
- *uses horticultural activities as an enhancement to the lifestyle of the senior citizens in Essex County*
- *supports Urban Community Projects throughout Essex County*



Container Gardening

Growing Plants in containers affords us opportunities to beautify our properties beyond the limitations of poor soil and tree roots. Containers can extend a colorful welcome at the front steps... brighten a patio or deck... bring color into deep shade. The container itself adds decorative accents to your garden.

Actually, a container is a very small garden. Anything that will hold the soil and allow for drainage can be used. From the fine quality Italian terra cotta to wooden barrels to baskets - just use your imagination. Use the biggest containers you can manage. You'll be able to make more interesting arrangements and they will require less watering.

Don't take it too seriously. If you are not totally satisfied with your results this season - there is always next year.

Have fun and enjoy making your own container garden!



Container Gardening Ideas and Tips



1. Choose the pots

- They can be clay, wood, plastic, ceramic, old buckets, plastic tubs, discarded kitchen pots, etc.
- All pots should have drainage holes.
- Elevate your pots by setting them on bricks or blocks.

2. Choose the potting mix.

- Use packaged potting mix rather than garden soil. It is lighter and weed free.
- Consider adding a water holding polymer (e.g. Soil Moist, Terra Sorb) to help cut down on watering.

3. Choose the plants.

- Select a tall growing variety for placement in the middle, 3 medium plants for filler around the tall plant and 3 short plants OR trailing plants around container edge.
- Select plants with an interesting variety of leaf textures, sizes and shapes and complimentary colors.



4. Prepare the pots.

- If your containers are large, place them at their final destination before filling them. Once they are full and watered, they may be too heavy to move.
- Fill the pot with potting mix.
- Water thoroughly until it drips out.
- Leave 1 inch between soil line and rim of the container.



5. Pot the plant.

- Remove the plant from its nursery container and place plant in soil at the depth of the nursery pot.
- Apply layer of mulch or stones to retain moisture.

6. Maintaining containers

Watering :



1. Water, water, water... the soil volume is smaller than in a garden and dries out more quickly, especially on concrete patios and in clay and porous planters. Check once or twice a day.
2. Apply water until it runs out of drainage holes.
3. If the soil appears to be getting excessively dry (ex. plant wilting every day) group containers together so foliage creates a canopy to help shade the soil and keep it cool.
4. Consider buying a 'moisture meter' which indicates if the soil is wet or dry.

Fertilizing:

1. Since containers are watered daily, the fertilizer is washed out more quickly. Reduce fertilizer to half strength and fertilize weekly.
2. Do not add more than recommended rate as it will burn and kill the plants.