

Container Vegetable Gardening

Choosing Vegetables for Containers

Nearly all leafy vegetables will do well in containers. Consider selecting dwarf and miniature varieties for container production.

Crops with many fruits per plant such as tomatoes are a good choice. The following table lists some of the vegetables and their requirements for container production.

A 12" x 48" x 8" box makes an excellent patio herb garden. Chives, garden thyme, basil, marjoram and summer savory will all do well in such a planter box. The sprawling growth habit of the various mints, oregano and rosemary make them attractive in hanging baskets.

Containers

Material – You can use containers made of clay, wood (redwood or cedar), plastic or metal. Also consider using barrels, flower pots, cut-off milk and bleach jugs or window boxes.

Holes – Each container must have drainage holes in the bottom so the plant roots will not stand in water. If the container does not already have holes, make at least four small nail holes in its sides, ½ inch from the bottom.

Size – In addition, the container should be the proper size for the plant growing in it.

Planting in Containers

Some vegetable seeds are planted directly in the containers where they will be growing; others are set in as transplants.

Use a commercially prepared greenhouse soil mix, available at local garden centers or greenhouses, to grow plants in containers. If you're going to have several large containers, you may want to mix your own.

Planting Procedure

Moisten the soil mix the day before you intend to plant for best results. Many mixes contain a high percentage of peat, which requires time to soak up water. Peat moistens faster with hot water than with cold water. A drop of dishwashing soap will help wet dry potting mixes.

Fill a clean container to within ½-inch of the top with the mixture. Follow the seed package's instructions for planting. Sow the seed more thickly than needed in case some do not germinate. Put a label with the name and variety of the vegetable and the date of planting in each container. Water the seed gently with a watering can after sowing, being careful not to wash out the seed. Or, put a burlap bag over the container. Thin the plants for proper spacing when they have two or three leaves.

Care

Pay particular attention to watering. Container soils can dry out very quickly, especially on a concrete patio in full sun. Daily watering may be necessary. Water when the soil feels dry. However, do not go to extremes. The soil should not be soggy or have water standing on top of it. Apply water until runs out the drainage holes.

Protect plants from very high heat caused by light reflection from the pavement or a building. If necessary, move them to a cooler spot or shade them during the hottest part of the day. Plants may also need to be taken to a more sheltered location during severe rain or wind storms.

Plants should be fertilized regularly. Make the first application three weeks after the plants have two sets of leaves. Repeat once a week, using a soluble plant food at one-half strength (according to label directions).

Keep a close watch for insects and diseases. Identify any problems and take appropriate control measures.

After you harvest spring and early summer crops, replant with vegetables for the summer or fall garden.

CONTAINER VEGETABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Variety	Season	Light	Spacing	Container	Varieties
Beets	Cool	Tolerates partial shade	2" – 3"	24" x 36" x 8"	Golden Beet (55), Ruby Queen (52), Detroit Dark Red (66)
Broccoli	Cool	Full sun	15"	12" x 48" x 8"	Green Comet (55), Premium Crop (58) Green Duke (65)
Cabbage	Cool	Full sun	12" – 24"	10" deep	Rubyball (68), Stonehead (70) Market Prize (76)
Carrots	Spring Fall	Partial shade	1 ½" – 3"	24" x 36" x 10"	Danvers Half Long (75), Royal Chartenay (70), Shorts'-n Sweet (68), Little Fingers (65)
Cucumbers	Warm	Full sun	12" – 16"	12" x 48" x 8"	Poinsett *65) Burpless Hybrid (62)
Eggplant	Warm	Full sun-light	1 per container	4-5 gal.	Dusky (61), Blackbell (70) Jersey King (75)
Kale	Cool Fall	Partial shade	6"	12" x 48" x 8"	Dwarf Blue Curled (550), Vates (57)
Lettuce	Early Spring Fall	Partial shade	4"-6" leaf 10" head	12" x 48" x 8"	Kentucky Bibb (54), Oakleaf (50), Buttercrunch (75), Red Sails (45), Burpee's Iceburg (85)
Onions (green)	Early Spring	Partial shade	2"	" deep	Ebeneezer(30) (in spring plant long-day variety; in fall, plant short-day variety.)
Onions (bulb)	Sept.	Full sun	2"		Spanish Bunch (early)
Peppers	Warm	Full sun	14" – 18"	½-4gal. container	Yolo (78), Gypsy Hybrid (56) Hot Anaheim (77), Jalapeno (65) Hungarian wax (65)
Radishes	Early Spring Fall	Full sun – light shade	1"	Any size, 6" deep	Cherry Belle (30), Icicle (28) Scarlet Globe (24)
Spinach	Spring Fall	Full sun-Light shade	5"	Any size, 6" deep	America (40), Meloday (43) Bloomsdale Savoy (40)
Swiss Chard	Spring Summer Fall	Partial shade	4" – 5"	Any size, 6" – 8" deep	Rhubard Bhard (60), Fordhook Giant (60)
Tomatoes	Full Season	Full sun at least 6 hours/day	1 per container	4-5 gal. container	Basket King (55) Burpee's Pixie Hybrid (52) Patio Hybrid (70, Small fry (VFN) (55)
Turnips	Cool	Partial Shade	3" – 4"	24" x 36" x 8"	Tokoyo Cross (35) Purpletop Globe (55) Seven Top (42)
Zucchini	Warm Season	Full sun	1 per container	5 gal. container	Black Magic (44) (green) Gold Rush (50) (yellow) Ambassador (47) (green)