

Creating Successful Containers

The container:

Make sure there is drainage on bottom. If you have one with no drainage that you prefer to use, you can either create drainage holes or you need to put a layer of gravel in the bottom of the pot and use a “planted pot inside a pot technique” so the plant is not sitting in water. You can always take the planted pot out and dump out some water if there has been heavy rainfall.

It is also a good idea with larger containers to add some wood chips or stone over the large holes on the bottom so that water can drain freely, and the holes do not get clogged.



Selecting location for potted plants:

Make sure you have properly assessed the light conditions where your container is to be placed and choose plants accordingly. Full Sun refers to 6 hours or more of sunlight, an example would be an east exposure where the sun rises at 6:30am and moves around the property at noon. This counts as full. Part Sun or Part Shade should get 3-6 hours of sun or dappled sun for longer periods. Shade plants can receive some sunlight but avoid any direct afternoon sunlight as that may scorch the plant.

Components of the potting mix:

2 parts potting mix

1 part compost, or topsoil, or potting soil. This component adds density and has better capacity to hold moisture and nutrients than potting mix alone.

If you have a large container filled with soil from last year, remove about half of that soil and mix the remainder with fresh mix as described above.

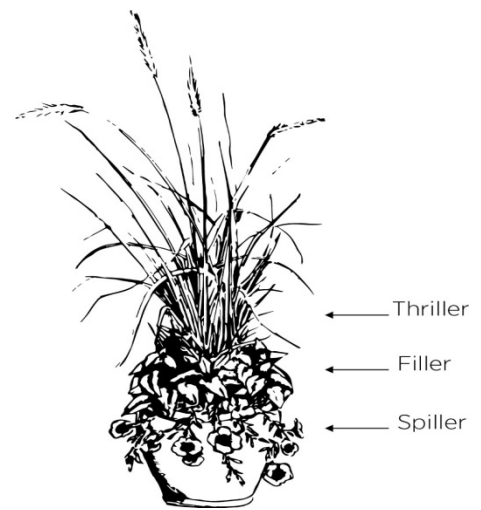
If you are using a small container (10” or less) or window boxes, I would recommend starting with all fresh soil and adding water storing crystals. Use the recommended amount on the package, which will help prevent under- and over-watering.

When filling the container with soil be sure to leave an inch from the rim to collect water. If you don’t, most of the water will simply spill out.

Add slow-release fertilizer pellets to top dress the plants. This will provide slow feeding over a few months.

The Thriller Filler Spiller technique used in container gardening:

This technique can be used in a single pot or if you have smaller pots they can be clustered together to create the effect. In addition you can use parts of the



technique, such as a thriller with a spiller if you want to highlight the vertical element. An example of this would be a grass with petunias cascading over the edge.

Thriller Plants: These plants will add height, drama, and a vertical element to the combination. These can either be flowering or foliage plants. Thrillers are generally put either in the center or at the back of the container (if your container will only be viewed from one side, for example if it's placed against the house). Some examples are: Tall Angelonia, Canna, Grasses.

Filler Plants: Once you've chosen your Thriller, choose your Filler varieties. Fillers tend to be more rounded and make the container look full. They are generally placed in front of, or around, the Thriller. If the Thriller is in the center of the container, the Fillers should surround the Thriller variety, or be placed midway between the Thriller and the edge of a container. Some examples are Lantana, Sunpatiens, Euphorbia, Marigolds, Shorter profusion type Zinnia, or Coleus.

Spiller Plants: Lastly, you add the Spillers. They are trailing plants that hang over the edge of the planter. If the container is going to be viewed from all sides, Spillers should be placed on all sides. If the container is going to be viewed from only one side, the plant can be placed in the front of the container. Some examples are Lobularia, Bacopa, Ipomea (sweet potato vine) Petunias, Ivy.

Maintenance:

After planting, be sure to water the container thoroughly.

Keep an eye on water, the container should be watered with tap or collected rain water when the top inch of soil is dry. Also be mindful of rainfall.

Once a week give the container a light liquid feed, even if you have used the slow-release slow fertilizer.

Keep the spent flowers pinched, in addition to any discolored leaves.

In July you can prune back several inches off your petunias or any vining plants to get a re-flush and hold the shape.