

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Tip of the Week

By Beverly Wickersham

“Tips for Container Gardeners #1”

Many gardeners who have spacious flower and vegetable beds at hand also enjoy the delight and the convenience of Container Gardening. Culinary herbs can be grown just a few feet from the kitchen door or on a sunny windowsill, and colorful blooms can be a comfort and delight when family and friends gather on a porch or patio. Container gardening is a work of art with no end to the beauty a gardener can create. Here are a few suggestions that will make your creative project successful.

CONTAINER SELECTION

The containers can be as varied as the plants you place in them. For example, **glazed ceramic pots** are an excellent choice. They do not deteriorate in freezing weather, nor do they dry out quickly. However, they are more expensive than clay or plastic pots. There are also a very wide variety of shapes and colors to choose your pots. If you were to choose **clay pots** instead, you would find they are inexpensive, allowing the purchase of rather large pots for a showy display. However, freezing weather is an enemy and could cause some deterioration. The unglazed clay also allows for evaporation of moisture from the soil very quickly, which means more watering in our summer heat.

Wooden containers are also attractive and come in a variety of sizes and shapes. Redwood and cedar containers are rot resistant and do not require staining or painting. They are also a do-it-yourself easy project. **Caution: Do not** use a wood container that has been treated with toxic compounds such as creosote. This includes some landscaping timbers. The vapors can damage the plants.

“Antique” containers such as grandmother’s blue and white chipped enamel washbowl can be used if drainage holes are provided. Use a masonry drill bit to make the holes.

Choose the pot size carefully. It should be between 15 and 120 quarts capacity. Small pots will restrict root growth and require more frequent watering. Make certain that any pot you use has several drainage holes. To further enhance good drainage, place bricks or blocks of wood under the containers. If they are large pots, you might consider the wheeled potholders for ease of moving them when needed.

Next week’s article will cover the soil mix, fertilizer and watering practices for container gardening and the identification of plants that are well suited for container gardening. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com