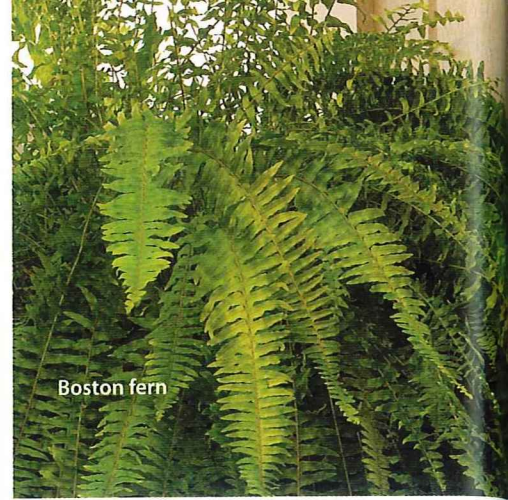


# Foliage

**LOVE THOSE LEAVES** Plants can't survive without leaves — they manufacture food. But leaves don't have to be simply utilitarian; they can be star performers, too. All in all, great foliage can keep your garden interesting and colorful much longer than almost any flower. In truth, they are the workhorses of a container combo.

A neutral green foliage, like Boston fern, can weave a diverse bunch of flower colors and shapes together into one stunning container. Or choose a plant with vivid leaves, such as a coleus, and make it the centerpiece of a combo with pale pastel or white flowers. Maybe your color scheme didn't come out the way you expected and clashes with the container. A cascade of foliage can disguise the pot so it doesn't show as much. Better yet, just embrace foliage and try a container with leaves only. Make it interesting by mixing up the textures and colors. You'll never miss the flowers!

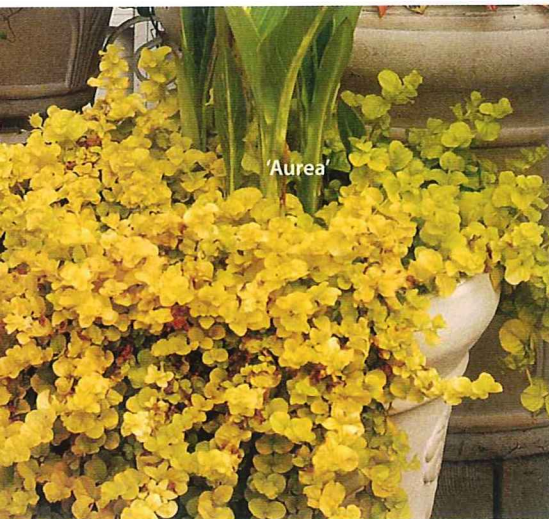


Boston fern

## Boston fern *Nephrolepis exaltata*

**STAR QUALITIES** Sometimes all you need is some bright green foliage to perk up a container. Look no further than Boston fern. The 1- to 2-ft.-tall mound of arching fronds provides unique texture to a combo and sways in the breeze to add movement, too.

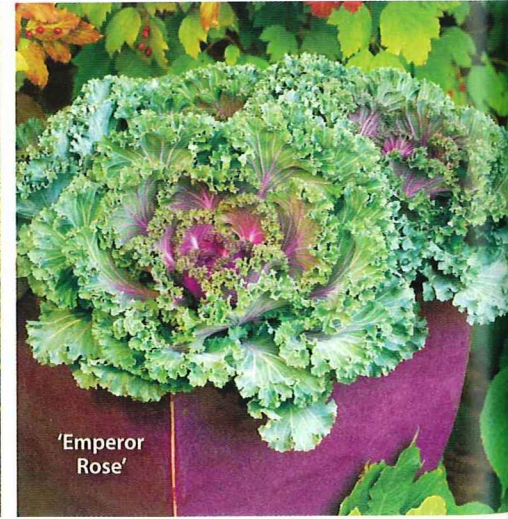
**HOW TO GROW IT** Boston fern does best in part shade to shade. Keep the soil moist, and if you live in a dry climate, mist the leaves. This tender perennial doesn't grow quickly, so choose a specimen that's the right size for the container when you plant — it won't get much bigger.



'Aurea'



'Aureola'



'Emperor Rose'

## Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*

**STAR QUALITIES** The bright gold foliage of 'Aurea' spilling over the edge is a great way to soften the lip of a pot. This is a fast spreader, so you can start with a small plant and by mid-summer you'll have a lush cascade of gold.

**HOW TO GROW IT** Plant it at the edge of the pot and stand back. Creeping Jenny is an easy-to-grow perennial — whatever the rest of your plants in the container like, it'll be happy. Keep shears handy and snip stems if they grow too long. It does fine in sun or shade, but you get the best color in full sun.

## Hakonechloa *Hakonechloa macra*

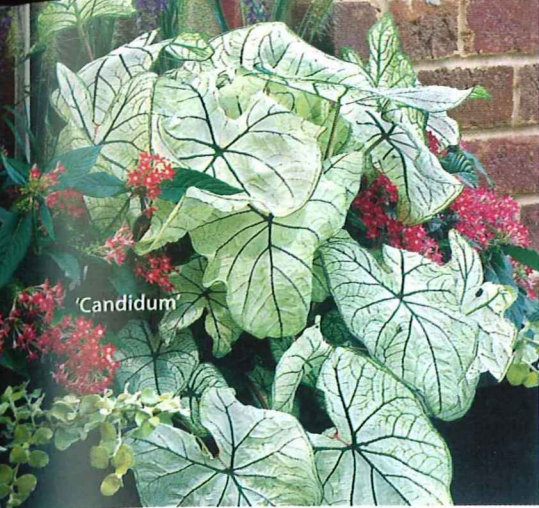
**STAR QUALITIES** Cascades of chartreuse foliage, like those of 'Aureola', are terrific at the edge of a container. This grass can grow 12 to 24 in. tall and wide, but the fine texture keeps it from overpowering a combo.

**HOW TO GROW IT** This graceful perennial grass tolerates shade to full sun, but the brightest leaf color will be in part shade. It can be slow-growing, so in a container it's a good idea to start with a large specimen. There are no major pests or diseases to bother the foliage so it always looks good.

## Flowering kale *Brassica oleracea*

**STAR QUALITIES** The colors of this 12- to 18-in.-tall annual usually intensify with cold temperatures. Basic leaf color is blue-green, but it can be tinted with shades of red and purple, even white. And the leaves may be deeply cut or very ruffled like 'Emperor Rose'.

**HOW TO GROW IT** Pick up potted plants in spring or late summer to grow in full sun. As you plant, tip the rosette so the stem leans on the edge of the pot. That's the best way to show off the colorful leaves.

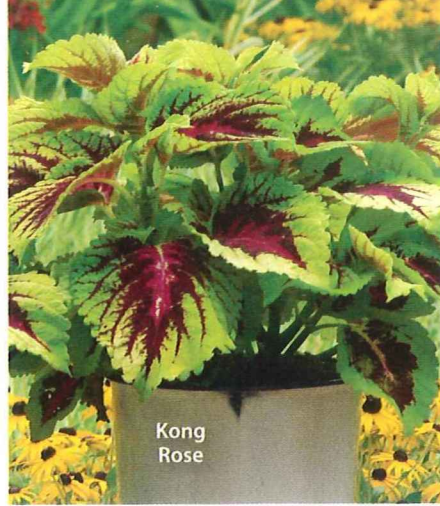


'Candidum'

### Caladium *Caladium* hybrids

**STAR QUALITIES** Large leaves, 6 to 18 in. long, in red, pink, green or white, such as those of 'Candidum', make caladium a great focal point or supporting player in part sun to shade. The blooms aren't showy and can be snipped off. Most varieties grow 1 to 2 ft. tall and wide.

**HOW TO GROW IT** These leaves grow from a tuber that can be started indoors. Being tropical, caladium will not tolerate cold temperatures. Wait until the same time you'd plant tomatoes before you put one outside. And keep the soil moist or the leaves wither.



Kong  
Rose

### Coleus *Solenostemon* hybrids

**STAR QUALITIES** Big and bold, like Kong™ Rose in the photo above, or small and demure, there's a coleus for any position in any container. Colors range from green, yellow and red to deep brown and vibrant orange, as well as many combinations. It's a fast grower, reaching 6 to 36 in. tall, so start with small plants.

**HOW TO GROW IT** Depending on the cultivar, this tender perennial may prefer either sun or shade. Keep the soil moist and pinch out the flowers to keep the plant compact and growing lots of leafy side branches.

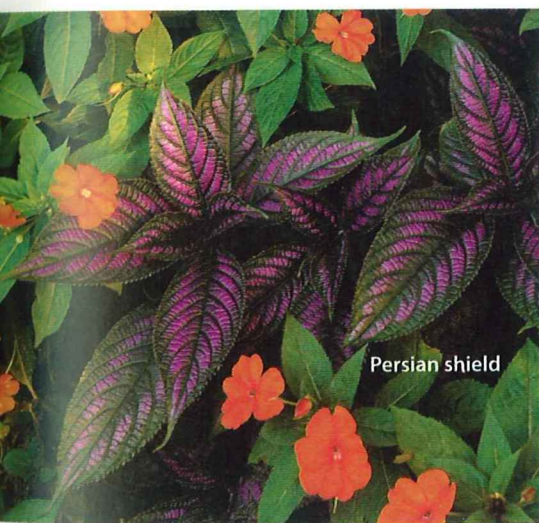


'Caramel'

### Coral bells *Heuchera* hybrids

**STAR QUALITIES** You may think of this as a perennial you grow in your garden. But you'll find ones with colorful leaves in shades of burgundy, green or gold, like 'Caramel'. With all that color, and at 6 to 18 in. tall, this plant is a great addition to a container.

**HOW TO GROW IT** Foliage is healthiest in full sun to part shade. All cultivars will flower, but some blooms aren't showy, so snip them off if you like. Since this is not a fast-growing plant, for a container combo you may want to start with a large specimen.

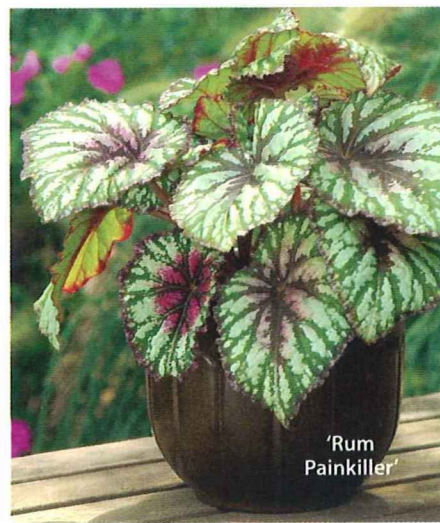


Persian shield

### Persian shield *Strobilanthes dyeriana*

**STAR QUALITIES** Slightly shiny purple leaves make a great contrast or backdrop for plants with bright-colored flowers. Persian shield also has pale blue blossoms in late summer or fall — you can leave them or pinch them off.

**HOW TO GROW IT** This tender perennial can grow up to 4 ft. tall and 3 ft. wide, but with a bit of pruning you can keep it as short as 1 ft. It's adaptable, but the foliage color is best in part shade. Don't let the soil get too dry or it'll drop leaves. And it can be overwintered indoors as a house plant.



'Rum  
Painkiller'

### Rex begonia *Begonia rex*

**STAR QUALITIES** A silver-leaved rex begonia like 'Rum Painkiller' is a great choice for perking up a shady corner. You'll find sizes from 12 to 18 in. tall. And while most cultivars have other colors, such as red, mixed into their leaves, it's the silver that makes them stars.

**HOW TO GROW THEM** Keep these tender perennials out of direct sunlight or the leaves will scorch. Moist, but not wet, soil is ideal. And feed them with a water-soluble fertilizer at half strength every two weeks.



Illusion  
Emerald Lace

### Sweet potato vine *Ipomoea batatas*

**STAR QUALITIES** Cascades of burgundy, brown, gold or variegated leaves make this tender perennial popular. Illusion™ Emerald Lace is a new cultivar with deeply cut leaves. Also look for the Sweet Caroline series, with a compact habit that's great in containers.

**HOW TO GROW IT** Occasionally snip the tips of the stems back a couple of inches to keep this vine under control. Give it full sun to part shade for the best leaf color. It grows quickly, so you can start with a small plant and reap big rewards in no time.