

Simple, smart design ideas for container success!

How to Wow with Containers

Would you like your containers loaded with bright colorful blooms or do you prefer sophisticated studies in foliage textures? Well, with the huge variety of containers and plants available, the combinations you can create are limited only by your imagination.

This isn't a story about how to create or grow a good-looking container, though. I'd like to show you some great ideas for how to use your pots in your yard to draw attention, direct traffic, set moods and more. Along the way you'll see containers used as focal points, to mark transitions and to fill in unexpected gaps in the garden. Think you don't have any place to grow containers? I'll share some ways to enjoy colorful plantings in any space. To help you get each of these looks in your own yard, I've also included plans and plant lists for each pot.

1 MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE... Pots make great accents or focal points to draw your eye. Whether it's filled with a combination of plants or a single specimen, an eye-grabbing container can direct attention to itself. A bonus? You can also use it to divert attention away from a less-than-attractive eyesore, such as a compost pile, utility area or your neighbor's garbage cans.

It's hard not to notice the bright green-and-yellow-striped pot in the yard in photo 1. The long arching leaves of this New Zealand flax echo the colors of its container and are showcased by the smooth expanse of green lawn surrounding it. Placed in the center of a long yard like this, it stops your eyes and effectively creates two smaller, more intimate garden "rooms." Instead of looking immediately at the far end of the yard, you'll pause, explore the closer space first,



Container is 16 in. in diameter

Look at me!

With its long, often brightly colored leaves, New Zealand flax is an easy-to-grow perennial that really calls attention to itself. Use a potting mix with lots of organic matter in it and don't let the plant completely dry out. If the lower leaves start to turn brown with age, simply cut them off near the base with sharp scissors.

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant
A	New Zealand flax <i>Phormium</i> 'Yellow Wave'	1



and then move on to the area beyond the container. So the pot slows you down and lets you really enjoy the journey.

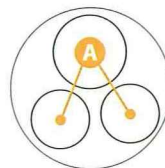
2 FOLLOW ME Directing traffic in your garden is another way to utilize containers. Whether they're pots of bright flowers or elegant foliage combinations, containers set the tone for each garden "room." You can also use pots to mark the transitions where visitors travel from one area to another. Notice how two sets of pots placed on either side of the steps in photo 2 give the entrance more weight than a single line of containers would. Repeating plant material and colors in the window-boxes draws your eyes to the house, as well. And from a practical standpoint, the pots of colorful flowers and foliage marking the entry alert strollers to slow down and watch their step as they approach the front door. When placing pots on steps, be sure to allow at least 2 to 3 feet of clear space to walk so you don't trip your garden guests.

Ready to learn more ways to design with containers in your garden? Turn the page.

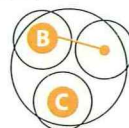
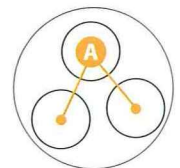
Step right up

A beautiful garden enhances any home, but to really make visitors feel welcome, use colorful container plantings to show them right to the front door. Growing these sun-loving annuals in terra-cotta pots of similar sizes simplifies care. All the pots will need water and fertilizer at about the same intervals.

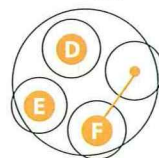
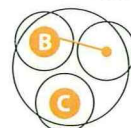
Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant
A	Oxalis <i>Oxalis triangularis</i>	6
B	Licorice plant <i>Helichrysum petiolare</i>	4
C	Geranium <i>Pelargonium</i> 'Vancouver Centennial'	2
D	Cape daisy <i>Osteospermum Soprano</i> ® Light Purple	1
E	Licorice plant <i>Helichrysum petiolare</i> 'Limelight'	1
F	Petunia <i>Petunia Surfinia Sky Blue</i> ('Keilavbu')	2
G	Geranium <i>Pelargonium</i> 'Mrs. Pollock'	1
H	Sweet potato vine <i>Ipomoea batatas</i> 'Margarita'	1
I	Bacopa <i>Sutera cordata</i> Cabana® Trailing Blue	1



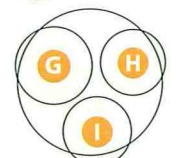
Containers are 16 in. in diameter



Containers are 12 in. in diameter



Containers are 14 in. in diameter



USING CONTAINERS CREATIVELY

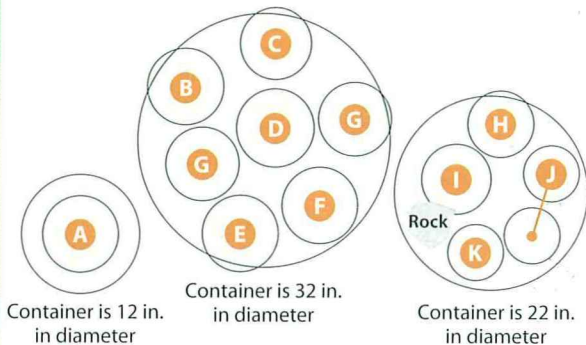


Call for the stand-in

Part to full sun and regular moisture keep the plants in the two containers on the left looking good. Can't bear to say good-bye at the end of the season? Overwinter coleus and Persian shield by taking stem cuttings in late summer and rooting them in moist potting mix.

Give the Japanese painted fern and sedge in the smaller pot to the right even moisture. In USDA zones 6 or colder, remove the fern and coral bells from the small pot and sedum from the large one and plant them in the garden in early fall to keep them through the winter.

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant
A	Lantana <i>Lantana</i> 'Radiation'	1
B	Coleus <i>Solenostemon</i> 'Freckles'	1
C	Persian shield <i>Strobilanthes dyeriana</i>	1
D	Tall sedum <i>Sedum erythrostictum</i> 'Mediovariegatum'	1
E	Sweet potato vine <i>Ipomoea batatas</i> 'Sweet Caroline Purple'	1
F	Petunia <i>Petunia</i> Supertunia® Mini Blue	1
G	Coleus <i>Solenostemon</i> Color Blaze® Sedona	2
H	Japanese painted fern <i>Athyrium</i> 'Ghost'	1
I	Coral bells <i>Heuchera</i> 'Peach Flambe'	1
J	Irish moss <i>Sagina subulata</i>	2
K	Sedge <i>Carex oshimensis</i> 'Evergold'	1



3 FILL THE GAPS As anyone who grows plants can tell you, gardening is full of surprises. That perennial that bloomed so profusely and filled your border last year may succumb to a long hot spell this year. Or insect pests may damage it before you've even noticed they were there, leaving a hard-to-miss gap in the garden. Sometimes the void in a border results after spring-blooming plants or bulbs die back. Though the three container plantings in photo 3 seem close together, the spot where the largest one sits receives much more late-day sunshine than the smaller one on the right. The Japanese painted fern and coral bells in that smaller pot appreciate the same part-shade situation as the surrounding hostas.

In addition to filling unexpected spaces, pots come in handy for adding dashes of color in awkward spots that might otherwise be hard to garden in. Around the base of a shallow-rooted tree is an example. Not only is it hard to dig around the roots, but the tree greedily grabs any moisture in the surrounding soil. Simply place a pot in the spot. If the plants need a bit of sun for the best blooms, occasionally swap the pots with ones in a place with a little more sun. A few weeks will keep the flowers coming.

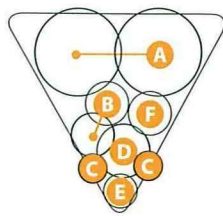
4 GROW WHERE THERE'S NO GARDEN Closing a gap in the garden is all well and good. But what if you don't have a garden at all? Don't despair. In fact, places that lack traditional garden spaces, like concrete-hemmed condos or city townhouses, need the fresh color and scent of plants even more. And



4

Hot and sunny scene

The purple fountain grass, as well as the other annuals in this planting, can take the sun and heat well. But while they're tough, a few steps will lead to healthier and better-looking plants. Work water-absorbing crystals into the mix when you plant, check the soil daily and give the plants consistent moisture.



Containers are 16 in. on each side

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant
A	Purple fountain grass <i>Pennisetum setaceum</i> 'Rubrum'	2
B	Rudbeckia <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> 'TigerEye Gold'	2
C	Dichondra <i>Dichondra argentea</i> 'Silver Falls'	2
D	Bigleaf coreopsis <i>Coreopsis</i> 'Jethro Tull'	1
E	Kale <i>Brassica oleracea</i>	1
F	Cockscomb <i>Celosia</i> 'Dark Caracas'	1

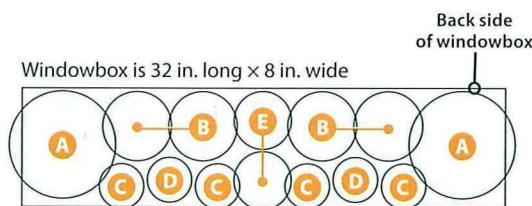


5

Winning spring windowboxes

Open the windows to enjoy the soft fragrance of these nemesias. If you deadhead regularly, the plants will flower better and longer and they'll look tidier, too. When summer heat makes these spring plants start to fade, replace them with your favorite summer annuals.

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant
A	Calibrachoa <i>Calibrachoa</i> Noa™ Tangerine	2
B	Snapdragon <i>Antirrhinum majus</i> Chimes™ Bronze	4
C	Nemesia <i>Nemesia fruticans</i> Compact Pink Innocence®	4
D	Pansy <i>Viola</i> 'Whiskers Yellow'	2
E	Wallflower <i>Erysimum</i> Citrona™ Yellow	2



Windowbox is 32 in. long x 8 in. wide

planting in containers is definitely the way to go in these spaces. But choose plants carefully. Concrete both reflects and radiates the sun's heat in a sunny spot like this. A layer of insulating bubble wrap lining the inside of these pots helps keep the roots and surrounding soil cooler.

The 42-inch-tall, narrow pots in photo 4 are in perfect balance with the space because they're large enough to be in proportion with the wide garage door and wall. Smaller pots would look dwarfed in this spot. Their strong vertical shape also helps counteract all of the horizontal lines created by the home's siding and stone. And they bring some much-needed color to this bland exterior. Breeze-tossed purple fountain grass flowers add movement and life to an otherwise static vignette.

5 GROW AT EYE LEVEL The cheery windowboxes in photo 5 demonstrate yet another advantage to growing in containers. You can place plants right at eye level, so you'll enjoy the view from a greater distance. And since you'll see the plants often, you're more likely to give them the consistent moisture that's so important to keeping them growing well. Repeating plants and containers like this helps break up the monotonous appearance of this long brick wall. Dashes of bright orange and other flower colors distract your eye from those strong light-colored lines of the mortar. Plus, these flowers aren't bee-magnets — not what you'd want next to a busy sidewalk.

And speaking of looking good, on the next pages I'll share how to use containers in groupings so you'll get even more impact in any garden space.

GREAT CONTAINER GROUPS

Some spaces — especially larger areas — practically scream for container groupings. How do you create an attractive combination of pots? Here are a few tips to create a container grouping that looks “put-together.”

6 LET ME REPEAT THAT One of the keys to making a container grouping successful is to use repetition. Repeating similar colors, whether in containers or plants, creates a cohesive, unified feeling for your combination. See how all the pots in photo 6 share the same bold blue? Though the pot shapes vary, the consistent blue glaze not only catches your eye, but announces that these containers belong together.

While repeating colors or other elements in a grouping is good, a bunch of the same pots with the exact same selection of plants gets boring quickly. As when designing a single container, vary the sizes and shapes of your plants or pots to keep things interesting. And in a grouping, think about the old recipe that you use for a single pot — focal point,

filler and trailer. Though the three pots below contain many of the same plants, the tall narrow pot with its upright mother-in-law’s tongue gives the more rounded pots a needed vertical focal point. (It’s standing on an overturned pot for a little extra height.) Arrowhead plant and euphorbias act as fillers, with burgundy sweet potato vines filling the role of trailers.

Think about how the containers and plants relate to their surroundings. In photo 6, red bricks and crisp white handrails evoke a clean, rather formal feel to the entry steps. Cobalt blue glazed pots match that mood and harmonize with the gray house paint, as well. Positioned to one side of the door, the group grabs your attention, while staying safely out of your path.

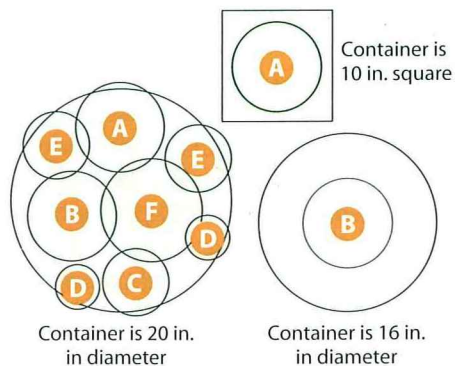
7 MATCH YOUR SPACE The three containers in photo 7 all hold bright-pink-flowering plants, but the pots themselves are completely different in shape, color and material. The variety in the pots



Three's company

Both Reiger begonias and mother-in-law’s tongue are house plants. The begonias are short-lived, so when frost hits, toss them. But the mother-in-law’s tongue will live for years indoors in a warm room with indirect light.

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant
A	Mother-in-law’s tongue <i>Sansevieria trifasciata</i>	2
B	Arrowhead plant <i>Syngonium 'Neon'</i>	2
C	Rieger begonia <i>Begonia xhiemalis</i>	1
D	Sweet potato vine <i>Ipomoea batatas 'Sweet Caroline Red'</i>	2
E	Angelonia <i>Angelonia Angelface® White</i>	2
F	Euphorbia <i>Euphorbia characias 'Glacier Blue'</i>	1





7

contributes an interesting contrast to the grouping and adds to the informal air.

With its comfortable furniture and view of the pretty white garden gazebo, the small patio elicits a relaxed atmosphere. Did you notice how the dark gray container repeats the color of the metal glider and the hanging basket? Or that the pink stripes of the cushions and the other pink flowers blooming at the far side of the back yard echo the flowers in the containers on the patio? They're just two more examples of how repetition creates a cohesive look and helps tie this grouping to the other elements in this cheerful vignette.

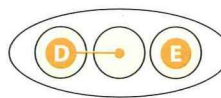
I hope I've been able to show you how easy it is to use containers in your garden. Whether you use a single stand-out plant to draw attention to itself, or a grouping of pots to brighten an area or guide visitors to the door, the possibilities are endless! □

— Deborah Gruca

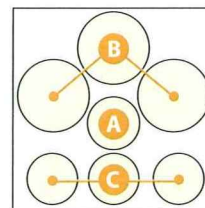
Colorful companions

Before frost hits in fall, pull these containers indoors and store them in indirect light in a cool spot (low to mid-40s) until late spring. Then cut back the begonias and euphorbia and trim the lantana. Set the pots in a sunny spot (but protect them during cold snaps!) and water well.

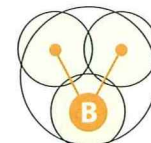
Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant
A	Lantana <i>Lantana camara</i> 'Confetti' (trained as standard)	1
B	Begonia <i>Begonia</i> Dragon Wing Pink ('Bepapink')	6
C	Euphorbia <i>Euphorbia hypericifolia</i> Diamond Frost® ('Inneuphe')	3
D	Begonia <i>Begonia</i> BIG™ Rose with Bronze Leaf	2
E	Begonia <i>Begonia</i> BIG™ Red with Green Leaf	1



Container is 20 in. long x 11 in. wide oval



Container is 18 in. square



Hanging basket is 14 in. in diameter