

# Flowering shrubs in containers can bring elegance your outdoor spaces

NAPSA

Many believe container gardening is the new way to grow: It's a fun, easy way to add color and bold seasonal interest to any size garden. Planting flowers and tropical plants in containers every year can become costly, but it's easy to minimize the expense by mixing in some shrubs.

Every garden can benefit from the more permanent, year-round beauty of flowering shrubs in containers. It's easy and rewarding to do, as long as the gardener follows a few simple guidelines.

**Starting with location:** Choosing a location for a potted shrub is the first step, as this will dictate what you can grow. Locations with easy access to water and out of the path of high winds are best. How much sun is available should be considered; Roses, butterfly bush and lilac need at least six hours of uninterrupted sunlight daily; hydrangeas, azaleas and weigela will benefit from some shade during the hottest part of the day, especially in warm climates.

**Choose carefully:** Your local garden center is the best place to shop for plants. Low-growing shrubs, such as OSO Easy roses and Lo & Behold butterfly bushes, offer vivid color at eye level, while taller shrubs like Fine Line buckthorn and Black Lace elderberry add dramatic height and create privacy.

The container you choose must be large enough to accommodate your shrub. Look for sturdy pots that are at least 18 inches across and 16 inches tall to allow enough room for the plant to grow; larger is preferable. The container must have several open drainage holes in the bottom. Since your potted shrub will remain outdoors year-round, look for frostproof or

weatherproof containers if you live in a cold climate.

**Potting tips:** Fill your container with potting soil. Do not use garden soil or top soil, which may hinder drainage. Avoid putting anything in the bottom of the pot to take up space, as the weight of soil creates stability and the shrub's roots will need the room. Fill the pot to within 2 inches of the top, tamping soil down gently to prevent settling later. Make a well in the center of the pot to accommodate the new plant. Remove the shrub from its pot, gently untangle any visible root and place it in the hole.

Add or remove a bit of soil until the plant sits at the same level in the new pot as it was in its original container. Rotate the plant a few times to make sure that its best side faces outward. To finish, gently push the soil around the root-ball, eliminating air pockets and making sure the entire root mass is surrounded. Water immediately and thoroughly.

**Water is key:** Water is the most important factor in caring for your potted shrub. The soil may dry out quickly, especially during periods of hot weather. Check it frequently and water when

necessary, ideally in the mornings. Winter won't be a problem if you've selected a hardy plant and weatherproof container, but the plant may need a drink during winter warm spells when the potting soil is not frozen. Come spring, apply a granular fertilizer formulated for woody plants and incorporate it into the top few inches of soil.

The shrub will thrive for several seasons in its pot; you'll know it's time to transplant into the ground when growth becomes less vigorous and it becomes difficult to keep it well watered.

A complete selection of colorful hardy shrubs and more tips on care can be found at [www.provenwinners.com](http://www.provenwinners.com).

