A container garden is a great way to add textures, colors, smells and depth to your garden space, no matter the size!

It’s also a great way to better control the soil quality and location of your vegetables, flowers and herbs.

Why Plant a Container Garden?

Choosing a Container Size

The size of the container needs to be appropriate for the plant at full maturity. Look at the seed package to determine the size of the pot needed depending on spacing. Plants need enough room to grow roots depending on how much nutrients they need. Larger plants generally need more nutrients and smaller plants need less.

- Smaller containers are easier to move.
- Larger containers are better for large plants and may fit more than one variety.

Sun Exposure

Plants generally need 8 hours of sun. A plant might need more light if it starts to grow long stems, if leaves begin to turn yellow and fall off or if the plant’s growth is stunted. Alternatively, a plant might need less light if leaves show burned patches or develop brittle tips.

Watering & Moisture

Container plants tend to dry out faster than those grown in the ground, especially on sunny days. However, overwatering is still possible. Make sure the container has a few holes along the bottom to ensure proper drainage.

To test the moisture, stick your finger about two inches into the soil. If it’s dry, your plant needs more water. If you see water pooling around the base of your plant, your container might need more drainage holes or you might be overwatering.

Learn more at freshapproach.org/gardening
Adding Soil

Organic potting soil with organic fertilizer works well for most plants. Add more organic compost periodically to keep your soil alive. Soil needs to have good drainage, but also retain moisture.

Different plants do better at different conditions. You can purchase a soil test kit from your local nursery, home improvement store, or order it online to more accurately amend and fertilize based on the nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and pH level results.

Plant Varieties

Choose varieties that will do well in containers. Sometimes, the seed packet will tell you if the variety is good for containers, but it doesn’t hurt to experiment! Just be mindful of plant size at full maturity, and it’s nutrient needs.

Should I Use Seeds or Transplants?

Seeds are inexpensive. Transplants will cost you between $3-4 and seeds will be pennies to the dollar. BUT if you are running late in the season, transplants are a good last minute option.

Some plants grow better when transplanted. Starting with baby plants can give you more control and predictable results in the garden.

Transplants give you a huge jump-start on the season because they mature sooner, give you an earlier harvest, and can also be more resilient and more resistant to pests.

Transplanting is a good choice for plants with a long growing season, or plants which need to be mature before the hot weather arrives.

How to Transplant Seeds:

1. Count the true leaves on your seedling. Once seeds have grown 3 - 4 true leaves, they are ready to be transplanted into a larger pot.

2. Harden them off for about 1 week. This is when you bring seedlings outside for about 2 hours each day to make them stronger and more adaptable to their new environment.

3. Handle the seedlings carefully. Make a hole in the planting mix, place the seedling in the hole, and lightly press down the soil. Be sure to cover the root ball, but avoid covering the plant’s stem, leaves, or flowers.

4. Water the transplant right away. Be sure to keep the soil moist, not wet.