

# Container Gardens

By Katie Geist: CSU Extension, Colorado Master Gardener

Photos by Valerie Belding

So you want to grow a garden in Teller County? You'd like to enjoy freshly grown vegetables and have a splash of color from flowers but you live in the mountains, have limited time, wildlife, and granitic soil. What can a potential gardener do? An easy answer is container gardening.

Containers are an easy, flexible option. They can be put on a deck, patio or porch. They can be tucked in a safe spot near your home. Since containers are portable, you can move them as needed. Once planted, they require less time and effort. Many vegetable and flower varieties can thrive in containers.

So what kind of container can you use? Clay pots, plastic pots, barrels, strawberry pots, animal stock tanks, wire baskets, and metal planter boxes are all good choices. All pots need good drainage so be sure to drill a few holes in the bottom if your container doesn't already have them. Dollies on wheels can help you move heavy or large containers. Wheels can also allow you to move your pots in case of hail or a sudden freeze. Most veggies will need at least a five-gallon container.

Once you've chosen your containers, the next step is to prepare your selected pots for seeds or plants. A good potting soil is essential to the success of your garden. Many local businesses, including nurseries and feed stores, have a good selection of mixes to choose from. Fertilizer is necessary after planting to give you lots of blooms and plentiful produce.

Sunshine and water are also a major consideration. Too little or too much of both can impact your growing success. Many flowers and most vegetables need a lot of sunlight. Be sure to check out your plants' requirements on the seed packet or plant insert. Containers will need more frequent watering than an in-ground garden. So it's best to check your pots daily to determine watering needs. You want to avoid letting your containers dry out completely or having your plants in standing water because the roots need to breathe.

So what can you plant? Vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, radishes, and Swiss chard are great if you get an early season start. Herbs are easily grown and fun to experiment with in your cooking. Basil, parsley, chives, and thyme are good choices to begin with. Beans, beets, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, cucumbers, onions, tomatoes, and zucchini can also be grown in pots.

Annual flowers are fun and easy to grow. Geraniums, petunias, salvia, verbena and lobelia are colorful choices and do quite well in Teller County. Impatiens will bring a bright spot to a more shaded area such as a covered porch. Annual flowers are terrific to experiment with since there's a large variety available at a reasonable cost. Ornamental grasses will blow and sway in the wind adding grace to your container garden.

Succulents and cactus can add interest to your container garden. Perennials such as shasta daisies, penstemon, and gaillardia will bring color and dimension with interesting flowers and leaves.

For more information on container gardening visit the following links:

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07238.html>

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/mg/gardennotes/724.pdf>

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/columnngw/gr090509.html>

For questions regarding produce, landscape, and horticulture questions; please contact the Teller County, Colorado Master Gardener grow line at 686-7980, visit our website at [www.co.teller.co.us/csu](http://www.co.teller.co.us/csu) or visit our booth at the Woodland Park farmers' market.