

Container gardens: easy and elegant

You've seen them — those fabulous container gardens brimming with a fountain of vibrant colors and textures. And how about those amazing hanging baskets, cascading opulent living color with ease and grace as though Monet himself had designed them?

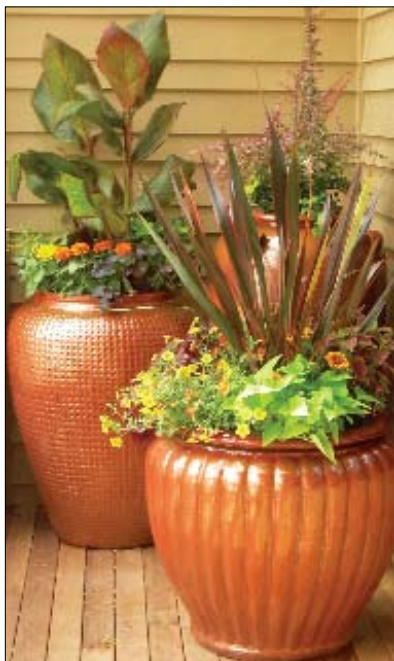
Among the great truths in a world of constant change is that nature is single-mindedly prolific. Skip even a week in the garden and you'll see a changing landscape as plants continue doing what they do best: grow! No delays, schedule changes or dropped calls hinder the process. They got the memo to grow, grow, grow at the beginning of time and have proceeded unabated ever since.

Environmental factors certainly impact the successful growth of plants. And this is where horticultural science has made the difference. We are able to either encourage growth, in the case of tomatoes or petunias, or discourage it, in the case of dandelions or wild blackberries. Yet, left to their devices, plants will grow with abandon, creating the organized chaos known as the natural landscape.

One trick to successful gardening is to understand those distinct characteristics that make each plant unique, allowing them to shine in the way nature intended. Some plants grow upright while others trail, some like shade, others sun. When it comes to creating container gardens, combining the right plant material with the proper amendments and conditions will provide you a living work of art. In other words, selecting plants to fill specific roles as defined by their natural growing style will be key in achieving the design you desire.

You don't need to be an expert to create a great container garden. With a bit of good information you too can design like a pro.

One great tip from experienced container designers when choosing the garden components is: "Thrillers can give height, lifting the design to create dimension. A few popular choices for thriller plants include snapdragons, lemon cypress, cannas, flax, dracaena spikes, nandina, and dwarf shrubs



and trees. Fillers add the bounty of color and texture to those parts in between those plants trailing and rising up. Some popular choices for filler plants include marigolds, begonias, geraniums, verbena, decorative foliage, coleus, New Guinea and double impatiens. Spillers speak for themselves. They are those lovely trailing plants that cascade downward. Some popular choices for spiller plants include lobelia, impatiens, bacopa, petunia, alyssum, creeping jenny and million bells. Hanging baskets may require a heavier emphasis on the spillers but the other two design elements still apply.

Whether you are a novice or a pro, all container gardens are not alike and while you may think a geranium is a geranium, think again. With the proper amendments your geranium will grow beyond your imagination. The same holds true for every plant. Good soil and fertilizer will turn your container garden into a showstopper. Lastly, when it comes to selecting a container, consider this purchase an investment. Many are works of art in their own right and will give you years of enjoyment. ■

Information courtesy of Wight's Home & Garden, 5026 196th St. S.W., Lynnwood. Contact them at (425) 775-3636 or visit www.wights.com.