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# Container Gardening

## How to grow vegetables in small spaces

Many garden enthusiasts find themselves in small spaces - apartments, townhomes or condominiums - that keep them from having the garden they dream about. Containers allow you to enjoy plants in areas where a traditional garden is awkward or impossible. Even in limited space, you can grow fruits, vegetables, flowers and herbs to supplement your grocery costs.

Container gardening also allows you to experiment with plants and optimize environmental conditions. You can even include companion planting in containers - for example, oregano repels insects that bother broccoli and also enhances the flavor of beans.

Be choosy and creative in selecting containers. The most important factor is proper drainage. For a large container, make sure there are at least 2 drainage holes. A layer of pebbles or gravel at the bottom of the pot will help drain excess moisture and prevent soil from washing out and clogging the holes. Keep in mind the size, material and shape of the container should be conducive to the plant's health. Plant roots need to breathe, so they like terra cotta pots, which also hold warmth. Plastic pots are easy to move, but do not allow plants to breathe freely. And don't forget eclectic containers like wire baskets, old-fashioned bathtubs and wheelbarrows - they make great containers as well. You are only limited by your imagination.

Fill containers with a fast-draining porous mix and add organic compost. Use mulch to reduce the amount of soil surface exposed to air and drying. Watering is critical. Do not rely on a schedule to maintain your containers - inspect them every day. Often, in very hot weather you may need to water two or three times each day. Always water until moisture comes out of the drainage holes.

When fertilizing, remember that frequent watering leaches out nutrients rapidly. Apply half-strength fertilizer twice as often.

Select varieties that do well in confined spaces. Miniature varieties and hybrid are best. Choose short growing season vegetables and also disease and insect-resistant varieties.