Creative Container Gardening
by Vicki L. Luna

Container gardening, or growing plants in a container, is a form of gardening that anyone, anywhere can do and. You can use your creativity and imagination to design a container garden as simple, as complex, or as diversified as your heart desires.

The nice thing about container gardening is that, once planted, your garden can be placed just about anywhere, in places that might be otherwise difficult to plant . . . On a windowsill, a patio or porch, on steps or walls, railings or balconies, a steep slope, rocky soil or no soil at all.

Container gardening allows you the ability to arrange and rearrange your garden as you please; to shape and define spaces; to add splashes of color; to screen unwanted views. The possibilities are unlimited.

The success of container garden is dependent on several critical factors:

1. A suitable pot.
2. Good potting soil.
3. Location
4. Healthy plants
5. Design and planting
6. Water
7. Fertilizer
8. Protection?
Choosing Your Pot

You can insure the success of your container garden by providing the best possible growing environment right from the beginning. Your choice of pots is every bit as important to the success of your container garden as are the plants themselves.

Almost anything can be used as a container as long as it provides adequate drainage and enough room for the roots. The possibilities again are unlimited . . . You can choose from a chipped or cracked tea cup, a ceramic pot, plastic, concrete, wood, even an old metal pot or a dilapidated watering can.

Remember when choosing your pot that smaller pots will require more frequent watering and maintenance, as will more porous pots such as terra cotta. Nevertheless, a porous pot is a good choice for container gardening because it allows air and moisture to pass freely through the pot, encouraging healthy root growth. A porous pot also allows harmful salts and mineral to leach out through the container walls.

Once you have decided on your pot, it is important that you clean it properly before planting it. A brand-new pot should be rinsed out.

A terra cotta pot should be soaked thoroughly in clean water, so that it doesn’t draw water away from the soil when you plant it.

If you are reusing an old container, scrub inside and out with a solution of 1 part bleach and 4 parts hot water. Rinse thoroughly with clear water.

Drainage

The number one cause of failure in container gardening is poor drainage. For the best results, your pot should have at least one drain hole in the bottom, covered with a fine wire screen or newspaper to keep soil from washing out and pests from crawling in, and the pot should be raised off the ground.

Small—medium container = 1/2 inch hole
Ex-large container (wine barrel) = 4-5 holes, 3/4 inch
No holes=make holes using an electric drill or a hammer and nail.

If you have a fragile or antique container that has no drainage and you don’t want to risk adding holes, you can always “double pot” by placing a pot with holes inside the one without holes. Before doing this you will want to add a layer of pebbles inside the pot without drainage so that the potted plant will not be sitting in water.

Good Potting Soil

You will want to begin with a good commercial potting soil made especially for containers. This will be easy to determine by reading the package itself. A good potting soil will contain all the ingredients necessary to promote the healthy growth of your container plants and will provide good drainage, while also retaining moisture.

Location

Where will your container garden be located? Location will ultimately dictate the type of plants you will be able to use in your garden. Will your pot be located indoors, outdoors, in full sun or shade, in a windy area or a protected areas, in a dry environment or by a water feature?

Healthy Plants

Once you know what type of plants to look for, you want to make sure that you select healthy plants from your local nursery that have growth habits and requirements are well suited to a container environment.
Choose plants with compact growth, a long flowering season, and/or attractive foliage. Consider a theme using annuals, perennials, edibles (herbs, vegetables, etc), ornamental grasses, cacti and succulents, bulbs, vines, or an ornamental dwarf tree. For an added dimension, incorporate color, shape, and texture into your garden to create visual harmony.

**Design & Planting**

1. Water plants well in their nursery containers before planting.

2. Start with a foundation plant with foliage that will look good all the time and/or a vertical accent plant, a taller plant that will go either in the center or toward the back of the pot.

   **Tip:** Before actually planting try arranging the plants while they are still in their pots to see how they look best.

3. Pour potting mix into the container.

4. Remove the plants from the nursery containers and gently separate the roots.

5. Add a couple of middle-height fillers and position them in the container, adding soil as you go and pressing firmly to remove any air pockets.

6. Last, but not least, add 1-2 low-growing or cascading plants around the perimeter of your garden.

7. Water gently but thoroughly until water runs out the drainage hole.

**Maintenance**

Water regularly during spring and summer growth periods—less during fall and winter dormant seasons. Because you are using containers, be especially aware that they will require more constant watering and vigilance. Without adequate water, your container garden will shrivel up and die in no time. Consider drip irrigation as a viable alternative.

Fertilize regularly during spring and summer growth periods—less during fall and winter dormant seasons. If you used a potting mix that contained nutrients when planting your container garden, you won’t need to fertilize until 4-6 weeks after planting. Thereafter, fertilize:

- **Annuals:** every 2 weeks
- **Perennials:** monthly
- **Roses:** every 2 weeks
- **Shrubs:** monthly

**Protection**

When using container plants sensitive to cold or frost and/or fragile pots such as terra cotta, which are susceptible to cracking during freezing temperatures, you will need to provide your container garden with winter protection. This can be accomplished by moving your pots indoors or under cover and blanketing them with fleece or burlap when frost threatens. You can also go a step further by wrapping the containers securely with bubble wrap.

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**MASTER GARDENER PICNIC**

**July 20, 11am -3pm, Camp Verde.**

**Map on page 7.**

**DON’T FORGET TO RSVP!**

Call Laura James and sign up to bring a dish. (928)778-3206.
Garlic News

It's hard for me to get through this time of year without mentioning the wonders of garlic. It's harvest time and my porch is filled with the scent of drying garlic. But make sure you save heads for planting this fall. Generally speaking, the bigger the clove the bigger the plant next year.

Now is a great time to find fresh garlic and, if you are a garlic fan like I am, you might want to try the following sauce and dip. Don't plan any major social events afterward. Both recipes are from "Garlic and Friends" by Penny Woodward.

**Onion, Shallot and Garlic Sauce**

Use on beef, pork, shrimp, vegetables or a strong flavored fish.

1 tablespoon onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon shallot, finely chopped
1 clove, finely chopped
2 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon flour
1 1/2 cups milk

Melt butter and gently sauté onions, shallots and garlic. Cook until transparent—not brown. Remove from heat and stir in flour until it is well blended. Return to heat and add the milk, stirring constantly. Continue to stir until the sauce thickens and cook gently for several minutes.

**Garlic Dip**

5 peeled garlic cloves
1 cup milk
2 egg yolks
1/4 cup warm cream
salt and pepper to taste

Add garlic cloves to milk and slowly bring to a boil. Simmer 5 minutes. Beat the egg yolks with warm cream and a little of the hot milk, beating vigorously to avoid lumps. Add the egg yolks and cream to the simmering mixture, stirring rapidly. Remove from heat and force through sieve (or use food processor) to cream garlic. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

July Calendar

We are in the throes of a major drought and being encouraged to conserve, but our plants need water. Mulch well to conserve water and still keep things alive. Even native plants will suffer in such conditions so don’t forget to water them also!

You can start to fertilize and transplant iris now and through the early fall.

Peach tree borers are active now. Look for a spot of clear resin indicating entrance and exit holes. Check the tips of the twigs also for borer damage.

Watch for corn earworm damage. Spray silks with vegetable or mineral oil when the silks start to turn brown.

Fertilize melon and squash vines.

Plant beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, green onions, leaf lettuce, peas, spinach and turnips for a fall harvest. Eggplant, okra, cantaloupe, peppers, pumpkins, tomatoes, watermelons and winter squash can also be planted. Potatoes can also go in but wait until the end of the month.

Remove faded flowers from roses and other summer annuals to keep the blooms coming.

Roses need fertilizer to keep blooming. Use a hose to knock off spider mites and aphids.

Solarize areas where you have had problems with soil-borne diseases or insects.

Cut back raspberry canes after fruit is harvested. Cut off canes that have borne fruit and tie new canes to the trellis. Wait to do this until August if you live in a really cold part of the county.

Watch for tomato hornworms. Control with Bt if you have a major infestation. If you have just a few, picking them by hand is easy to do.

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Aging Memories

I garden because my parents spoiled me as a child. No, it wasn’t because they bought me all sorts of toys or let me get out of my “chores.” It’s because my parents, especially my dad, appreciated good food. That may have been more because my dad did the purchasing and mom had to do the hard labor of preparing, canning or freezing it.

In our house there were often boxes of fruit waiting to be processed—cases of grapes from the u-pick-it places around Douglas to make into raisins or to be eaten fresh; tomatoes from the Japanese farmers on Baseline Road in Phoenix. We bought the cheap 50 cent to $1.00 lugs that were overripe and odd-shaped. The scent of tomatoes cooking was a common one in our house. The smell lingers permanently in my brain. Tomatoes that ended up on spaghetti or—my favorite—pizza. On vacations in Wisconsin, it was the strawberries and raspberries. The wild strawberries were so tiny that a cup of them was a triumph. My grandfather grew both berries and my uncle had an enormous field of strawberries. One summer I ate so many I broke out in hives and I’m normally allergy free. It only slowed me down; it didn’t stop me.

But the best and absolute finest experience was getting lugs of Oak Creek peaches. The area is more famous now for its apples but back when I was a kid (you can tell, you’re getting old when you start sentences with “back when I was a kid...”) Oak Creek had fabulous peaches. We’d take a vacation and stop along the way or, since my dad traveled a lot, he would bring some home. The sweet scent would fill the air. The juice would run down your arm as you ate them. One of the great experiences of childhood.

What happened since then? The peach trees weren’t really adapted to the area and large commercial farms replaced the small farmer. Shipability became more important than taste and houses were built on agricultural lands. The giant supermarket replaced small stores and somehow the fruit never tasted the same again.

While I have bought good strawberries at the grocery store, nothing can come close to those Oak Creek peaches. I rarely ever buy peaches anymore. They are more like baseballs and, no matter how careful I am, they seem to rot in the middle and stay hard on the outside.

I’m still trying to grow a peach tree. Texas root rot precludes me from planting it in the ground so I’m looking at other options. But I have a friend that shared some of his peaches one year (Thanks Norm!) and I was in heaven once again—peach ice cream, peach pie and eating them fresh with the juice running down my arm.

MASTER GARDENER PICNIC

July 20, 11am -3pm, Camp Verde.
Map on page 7.

DON’T FORGET TO RSVP !
Call Laura James and sign up to bring a dish (928)778-3206.
Berry season is coming and jam is a wonderful way to preserve them. While I am a bit of a purist and prefer them fresh on cereal, ice cream or straight off the bush, sometimes there are so many you have to preserve them somehow. Maybe you want a reminder of summer, come January. Try some preserves to keep the memory of summer.

**Red Raspberry Jam**

- 6 cups red raspberries (4 cups of crushed berries)
- 6 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 pouch (3 oz.) liquid pectin
- 7 half-pint jars with lids (use only new lids) Sterilize jars and lids

Rinse berries lightly and drain. Remove any spoiled or damaged berries. Crush berries lightly with a potato masher or fork. Make sure you have 4 cups after crushing. Add sugar and mix thoroughly. Cut open pectin pouch and have ready. Place it in a cup so the pectin doesn’t run out on the counter.

Place berries and sugar in a large pan. Bring to a full rolling boil over high heat. Stirring vigorously, pour in pectin all at once. When the mixture again reaches a full rolling boil, stir for 1 minute.

Remove from heat and skim off any foam with a spoon. You may wish to move pan to the sink.

To sterilize the jars and lids, place in large pan of water on the stove. Water should cover jars and lids. Bring to a boil and let boil for 5 min. Use tongs to remove jars and lids from hot water as you fill them.

Pour preserves into jars. Make sure you clean off lip of jar so the lid fits tightly. Fill to within 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch of rim. Place lids on and tighten well. Set jars upside down for 5 minutes and then set upright. Let cool. Lid should "pop" as it cools. If the lid doesn’t become depressed and tight, the seal is incomplete. You can either reseal with a new lid or place in refrigerator and use immediately. Store in a cool dark place.

**Raspberry Plum Jam**

- 1 1/4 lb firm ripe plums (need 2 cups chopped)
- 1 1/2 cups fresh red raspberries
- 5 cups sugar
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 pouch (3 oz.) liquid pectin
- 6 half-pint jars and lids sterilized

Rinse plums, cut in half and remove pits. Transfer to a food processor, chop fine. Rinse raspberries lightly and drain. For a smoother jam, crush slightly. Place plums and raspberries in 8 quart pan. Add sugar and lemon juice; mix thoroughly. Have pectin packet open and ready to use. Bring mixture to a rolling boil over high heat. Stirring vigorously add pectin all at once. When the mixture gets to a rolling boil again, stir for 1 minute.

Remove from heat and skim off any foam. Fill jars as above.
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What better why to spend a summer day!
July 20, 11am - 3pm, Camp Verde

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Ceci Gilbert is hosting party at 1925 S. Monroe Lane.

Take any of the three exits from I-17 (General Crook Rd, Hwy 260 or Montezuma Castle Hwy) into Camp Verde. When you get to Main Street/Hwy 260, go south, (towards Payson) and turn right onto Salt Mine Road. There is a Shell Gas Station at the turn. Stay on Salt Mine Road to Monroe Lane. (Do not turn on Monroe Place which comes first)
ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A FUN WAY TO GET SOME VOLUNTEER HOURS?

School gardening is the answer. Karen Barrow has been working on a garden at Daniel Bright School in Cottonwood and is looking for some help. She has a variety of tasks, from working with the children in small groups to pruning roses to helping with the pond. There is also an aviary and a rabbit hutch. Do your talents lie in any of these areas? Please call Karen at 282-7358.

**Youth Gardening**

Master Gardeners interested in youth gardening in the Yavapai County area, please call or e-mail Cindi Shaffer at 928.717.0828 or cindi@shafcomm.com. Specifically there are volunteer opportunities available this summer in the Abia Judd Elementary School Secret Garden in Prescott at the corner of Iron Springs Road and Williamson Valley. **

**WHAT'S BUGGING YOU?**

Your help is needed! Elinor Benes is putting together a specimen insect collection to identify the insects in Yavapai County. Please collect your insect in a container or other suitable container. Include information as to where, time, plant taken from and any other pertinent info. Please include your name and phone number so that Elinor can contact you if she has any questions. Drop off samples at either Extension office. You can contact Elinor at 649-5814.

**Prescott Farmers Market**

July 13 & 27, August 10 & 24, and Sept. 14. Our mission will be to let the community know what we are all about and answer questions they may have. Four volunteers are needed each Saturday. Hours: 7:30 a.m. until noon, and with additional time to pick up the equipment from the Extension Office, set up the booth, and return everything, we are looking at six (6) hours total. Call Eunice Ricklefs at 771-9559 or Jonella Blake at 771-9471.

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The Arizona Highlands Garden Conference will be held at the Hart Prairie Lodge at the Arizona Snowbowl. Included with your $60 registration fee is a tote bag, a special gift, numerous informational items, lunch and snacks. Sponsors will be setting up information booths and donating raffle prizes. Participants may choose to care for one day only. Space is limited, so call or visit the University of Arizona Coconino County Extension Office today for information and to register. The office is located at 2304 N. 3rd Street, Flagstaff, or it can be reached at (928) 774-1868 or: www.ag.arizona.edu/coconino. If you have a disability for which you seek and accommodation, please notify us prior to the event.
Rose Hips

I noticed the other day that I had a number of rose hips forming on one of my roses. I pruned them all off, as I wanted the plant to continue blooming, but you don’t have to. Rose hips have a long history of being used. For those of you that are new to rose culture, rose hips are the pods that hold the seeds if one of the flowers is fertilized. They form a small ball, often brightly colored red, on the plant.

Rose hips are known to be high in antioxidants and vitamins A, B complex, E, K and C. They actually have more vitamin C than citrus. Beware—they are also known as a mild laxative and diuretic. In hard times in Europe during World War II the hips were eaten to help prevent scurvy.

The older species produce hips more often than the modern cultivated roses. Rugosas and Sweet Briar roses (Rosa eglanteria) and Rosa canina, R. laevigata, along with the damask rose, (Rosa damascena) produce abundant crops of rose hips.

If you want to produce rose hips, stop deadheading your roses. If the flower has been fertilized, a rose hip will form. Leave it on the plant till cold, but not freezing, weather sets in. Wash the hips, trim the stems and blossom ends, then freeze or dry. Store in airtight containers.

To use the hips, simmer in a (non-reactive) pan over low heat until soft and pulpy, about 20 minutes. Press the pulp through a strainer to remove seeds and use the pulp in jellies, jams and breads. The dried hips can be used in tea. Pour boiling water over 2 teaspoons of dried rose hips, steep and strain.

While the hips are considered safe, consuming too many can cause abdominal distress.

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The "Arizona Master Gardener Manual" is now on-line. Check out http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/mg/

NOTE FROM THE EDIT OR:
Let me know about your garden, the types of seeds you planted, interesting articles you found—anything of gardening interest. Send to: Nora Graf
P.O. Box 3652
Camp Verde, AZ 86322

Jeff Schalau
County Director,
Yavapai County Extension Agent,
Agriculture & Natural Resources

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