

Container Growing

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- Most standard size vegetables are suitable for containers.
- In general use containers that are 18"-24" wide, and 12"-16" deep. But all options are out there!
- You can plant 10-20 beans, 3 eggplants or peppers, or 2 cucumber vines in a large pot.
- Don't plant more than 1 squash or tomato per pot.
- Tuck in companions like edible flowers (nasturtiums, marigolds) or herbs around the edges.
- If space is at a premium, grow only things you know you will use

- **Minimum Soil Depths for Healthy Root Growth**

- **4-5 inches:** chives, lettuce, radishes, other salad greens, basil, coriander
- **6-7 inches:** bush beans, garlic, kohlrabi, Asian greens, onions, peas, mint, thyme
- **8-9 inches:** pole beans, carrots, chard, cucumbers, eggplant, fennel, leeks, peppers, tomatoes, spinach, parsley, rosemary
- **10-12 inches:** beets, broccoli, okra, potatoes, sweet corn, summer squash, dill, lemongrass

BEANS – Both bush and pole. Support beans with a trellis or tepee made from bamboo poles. If money is no object, go for a fancy wire obelisk.

CUCUMBERS – Bush and vine. Support vines with trellis, bird net, a ladder leaned up against a fence, or a chainlink fence itself.

EGGPLANTS – Regular size or varieties which produce miniature fruit. Some are even listed as "container" varieties.

PEPPERS – Any pepper will work in a container. There are also varieties labeled "container".

SUMMER SQUASH – Compact bush types work. One plant per pot, as they still have big leaves. Vining varieties need a trellis, bird net, or some sort of support.

WINTER SQUASH – Bush types are out there. Or try a vining type with smaller fruit using some sort of support. Pumpkin vines are possible, but you would have to support a large growing fruit as well as the vine itself.

TOMATOES – Best are those varieties which are specifically labeled for containers or look for bush types, determinate or semi-determinate. There are even dwarf varieties out there which are intended for window boxes or hanging baskets. An indeterminate or vining tomato can be grown as long as you provide it with support – a trellis, cage, or other system. Just make sure you can reach the fruit if it gets very tall.

PEAS – Bush or climbing. Many sugar snap peas only get 2-3' tall, and may not need support, but some, even short ones, do better with support, and the peas are easier to get to. Use a trellis, bird net, or place the pot next to a chainlink fence so the vines can climb.

LEAF CROPS – Loosehead lettuces, mescluns, cut-and-come-again types, microgreens. Chard works, but be sure to give it enough room for large leaves, or grow a miniature variety. Spinach is great, and even a vining type like "Malabar" can be accommodated if supported.

BRASSICAS – Cabbages which produce smaller heads, or are intended for container growing, otherwise they take up a lot of room for little return. Look for a compact broccoli or Brussel sprout. Same for cauliflower. There are more “container” varieties becoming available all the time as interest in container growing increases.

ROOT CROPS – Any type of radish. Beets, as long as you remember foliage and spacing for maturing beets. The shorter carrot varieties, like a Nantes or Chantenay, or any specific container variety. Carrots and parsnips would need at least 12” soil depth, so find the appropriate container. Rutabaga or turnips are possible, just remember the above-ground foliage and prepare to give it room. Use onion sets. Remember spacing for the mature bulb size. Try bunching onions, shallots or garlic. Potatoes can do well, especially varieties which produce a smaller potato.

HERBS – Basil, cilantro, chives, oregano, parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme, savory, stevia, marjoram, cutting celery – many are available as seedlings, or start from seed. Try borage, salad burnet, sorrel. Be aware of the mature plant size when choosing. Use separate containers for aggressively spreading plants like mints or lemon balm. Grow French tarragon in its own large container as a bush. Agastaches and monardas are good bee attractors.

FRUITS – Strawberries work well in containers, including hanging baskets and pouches. You can order bare root plants through a catalog, or get pony packs from local nurseries. Some container varieties can be started from seed.

If you are looking for something larger but still workable in a container, there are tree fruits. You can find dwarf root stock for many varieties. If you are interested in citrus, and have the space to bring it indoors over the winter, again, there are dwarf varieties for indoor growing. Bush fruits with dwarf varieties include blueberry, currant, gooseberry. Grapes can also be grown from a container with trellis support.

Good Vegetable Companions in Containers

- Beans, carrots, squash
- Eggplant, beans
- Tomatoes, basil, onions
- Lettuce, herbs
- Spinach, chard, dill

Vegetable Combinations to Avoid

- Beans with onions and garlic
- Carrots with dill or fennel
- Tomatoes or squash with potatoes
- Onions with beans or peas

Mel’s Square Foot Garden soil mix: 1/3 blended compost, 1/3 peat moss, 1/3 coarse vermiculite

How to calculate amount needed for 1 foot depth: 2’ X 4’ bed – 8 cubic feet

4’ X 4’ bed – 16 cubic feet