

**CARVER-SCOTT MASTER GARDENERS**

CONTAINER GARDENING

CHOOSING CONTAINERS

Anything can be a container. Consider the material, porosity, size, shape, weight and DRAINAGE!

GROWING MEDIUM

Do not use garden soil alone! Purchase potting soil mix, soilless mix, or make your own with equal parts peat moss, perlite and coarse sand. Many recipes are on line. Use fillers like Styrofoam in the bottom of your pots to take up wasted space and save money on potting medium. Absent disease, it is OK to reuse the mix, just add compost next year to improve the texture.

WATER

Consider the distance to your water source. You may need to water twice a day in hot weather. Water the soil, not the foliage. Research has not shown a benefit to hydrogel water retention crystals. Do not use saucers under your pots; raise them off surfaces with bottle caps. Hanging baskets need more frequent watering.

FERTILIZER

Many flowering annuals are heavy feeders. Phosphorous (middle number) is needed for blooming. The U recommends 5-10-5 or 5-10-15 (Nitrogen, Phosphorous, Potassium). Use half strength fertilizer twice as often or use slow release granules.

MAINTENANCE

Pinch back or prune to prevent plants from getting leggy. Watch for insects and diseases. Deadhead blossoms over 1" to keep flowers blooming. Best flowers for no deadheading: impatiens, begonias, million bells and others sold as "self-cleaning" like Supertunias.

DESIGN

Consider location. Choose appropriate plants (sun, shade, water needs, etc.) and make sure all plants in a container have the same requirements. Design is whatever you like, one type per pot or many. Consider shape, color, and texture. Flowers, foliage and the container can have color.

Easy design: Thrill, Fill, Spill

Usually annuals are selected because they bloom all season. You may follow a pattern or just experiment with available plants at your garden center. Read the labels for compatibility.

Petunia, Wave Petunia (trailing), Supertunia (self cleaning)	<i>Zinnia</i>	Ornamental Grasses, Fiber Optic Grass	Licorice Vine, <i>Helichrysum petiolatum</i>
Geranium, <i>Pelargonium</i>	Marigolds, <i>Tagetes</i>	<i>Fuchsia</i> , 'Autumnale'	Black and Blue Salvia, <i>Salvia guarantica</i> 'Black and Blue'
Snapdragon, <i>Antirrhinum</i>	Sweet Potato Vine, <i>Ipomoea</i>	<i>Alternanthera</i> , 'Party Time'	Blue Salvia, <i>Salvia</i>
Sweet Alyssum, <i>Lobularia</i> 'YOLO White'	<i>Coleus</i> , many	<i>Torenia</i>	Elephant Ear, Angel Wings, <i>Caladium</i> , C. 'Artful Heart Fire'
<i>Lobelia</i>	<i>Setcreasea purpea</i> , or <i>Tradescantia pallida</i>	<i>Angelonia</i>	<i>Gazania</i> , 'New Daisy Rose Stripe'
* <i>Impatiens wallerina</i>	<i>Begonia</i> , <i>B. boulevensis</i>	Million Bells, <i>Calibrachoa</i>	Fan flowers, <i>Scaevola</i>
* <i>Impatiens hawkeri</i> (New Guinea)	<i>Euphorbia</i> , 'Diamond Frost'	Succulents, many	<i>Alternanthera</i> , 'Party Time'
* <i>Impatiens Bounce</i> (hybrid)	<i>Perilla</i> Magilla	Moss Roses, <i>Portulaca</i> <i>grandiflora</i>	Houseplants, many

**Impatiens wallerina* is susceptible to downy mildew (actually the water mold *Plasmopara obducens*). New Guinea *Impatiens* are highly resistant. *Bounce*, new hybrid, is supposed to be resistant.

YEAR END

Ceramic pots should not be overwintered unprotected as they may crack. Empty them and store upside down in a protected area. Pots can be cleaned with a 10% bleach solution.

RESOURCES

University of Illinois Extension: <https://extension.illinois.edu/containergardening/welcome.cfm>

University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/flowers/>
<http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/diagnose/plant/>

Better Homes and Gardens: <http://www.bhg.com/gardening/container/>

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