

Tips for Successful Container Gardening

*This free tip sheet was produced by the Cheapskates Club –
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Start with a Good Soil Mix

Real garden soil compacts and turns into concrete under the pressure of regular watering. And when it does, plant roots stop growing because they require good open spaces to move into and absorb nutrients. Hard, compacted soils do not grow good plants so do not use real soil in your containers. Instead use a good quality potting mix combined with compost, peat moss and perlite to create a soil that won't compact and harm plant roots. I re-use my artificial potting soil from year to year. I dump it out of the pot. Chew it up with a shovel to cut up all last year's roots and add approximately 10 % by volume of compost. The compost increases air spaces and gives plants a boost in healthy nutrition.

Feed your plants weekly

Nitrogen, the engine of plant growth, is water soluble and as you water your containers from the top the dissolved nitrogen is leaving from the bottom. You can use any liquid plant food (like Seasol) to promote growth. Compost tea is the ultimate liquid plant food and if you make your own compost tea, your plants will respond with bigger and better blooms as well as increased vigour. You can also rinse out empty milk bottles and pour the water over your plants, they love it.

Irrigating Pot Gardens

Lots of people where I live have styrofoam or pot gardens (due to only having small courtyards). One way to make sure we can reuse our water, as well as don't waste it by using a watering can and having it go everywhere is a simple soda bottle or juice bottle. Cut the end of the bottom off, take the lid off and stick it lid end first into the ground. Now you can tip any water you have into the container and you know its going straight to the source! You could also use

irrigation spikes, but we found the above to be better, cheaper and helps recycle old bottles. Save the water you cook vegies in, or the water when waiting for the tap to go hot and use that quickly and easily... You're garden will love you for it!

Contributed by Amie, Coffs Harbour

From Keeping Feet Warm to Planter

For hanging against walls try hot water bottles. You need to cut a couple of slits at the bottom for drainage and slice one side only across the "shoulder". Use the existing top for hanging on a nail. the "pots" are durable, quite shapely and don't distort for years. The top is hidden by foliage. Try cutting a couple of "slices" and putting strawberries in!

Contributed by Elle, Blackburn South

Cheap as Chips Hanging Baskets

At the markets, op shops etc you can pick up old kitchen colanders cheap as chips. Line with a little hessian to stop the dirt falling through. The handles are great to tie wire to hang with and you have attractive cheap hanging pots. My advice for watering, to stop any mess, is to use a water spray bottle to keep soil damp.

Contributed by Kirsty

Water Well and Deep

And finally, no matter the size of the container, it is important to soak it all the way to the bottom at each watering. Continue watering until water emerges from the pot bottom. This ensures the roots can reach all parts of the container and grow properly.

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