

Apartment and Container Gardening

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Apartment Gardening

Living in a condominium or an apartment with a balcony gives the opportunity to explore the world of container gardens and alternative garden design. Even the smallest of spaces can be easily transformed into a personal oasis; a place to relax surrounded by nature. The process to achieve this kind of space undoubtedly requires some imagination, and the scene you choose can range from the truly artistic to a country living feel.

Gardens of all shapes and designs are possible, including gardens for people with busy lifestyles who do not have the time or the desire to maintain plants. A garden can be plant-free, using other objects such as driftwood, seashells, rocks, crystals, sculptures or water features. Some people find this kind of garden harmonious and enjoy the aspect of no maintenance.



Your balcony is an extension of your living space, and careful consideration to the design should be taken. Such considerations should include the amount of furniture needed in that space. You will need enough room to safely negotiate without bumping into pots; therefore careful measurements are a factor.

Container plants must have drainage. You can kill or cause disease in your plants from stagnant soil. Most outdoor containers come with drain holes, however some of the very large pots do not. You can drill them yourself using a carbide bit. Remember to pour water in the area you are going to drill, as drilling creates a great deal of heat and can cause cracking to the pot. Also recommended is the use of a drip tray. Most ceramic pots do not come with a drip tray and they have to be purchased separately. However, in the case of balcony gardens, both you and your neighbours below will appreciate that extra effort.

There are endless choices of plants available and the list increases every year with new varieties. Choose plants that will perform in the area you intend to place them. That means knowing what you are buying or, at the very least, reading the tags. Most greenhouses have staff on hand that can answer your questions. Research goes a long way and if you are working on a budget, it is best to have a planned list to avoid mistakes.



There are no steadfast rules to choosing colour combinations of flowering plants. It is entirely a personal choice. However, if you are trying to create a particular feeling to your space some rules will apply. For example, a high-energy garden will have a lot of red, yellow and orange colours. A romantic garden would have the paler tones of pink, tangerine, butter yellow, mauve and white. A garden to appreciate in the later evening hours would have a lot of white, green, red and variegated plants.

Aside from bringing nature into your space to create tranquillity, container gardens can have a practical value. Many herbs, fruit, vegetables, as well as edible flowers can be grown.¹

Creating an Apartment Garden

Even the tiniest of urban flats has enough space to accommodate a pocket-sized garden. Apartment dwellers of the world, cast off your shackles. It's time for a Green Revolution - without leaving the confines of your urban condominium. Obviously, a 1,000 sq. ft flat in a congested metro doesn't leave too much space for a garden. But with imagination, patience and a green thumb, people have stretched this space to its limits.

¹ <http://www.risingwomen.com/arctinkerbell.htm>

The most under-used space in a flat is perhaps the balcony, and it is this space that is most precious for wannabe gardeners. While those living on top floors of apartments with almost exclusive access to the rooftop have more than adequate space to give their imagination a free run, those on lower floors often have to make do with the little squares and rectangles that make up the balcony area.

Yet, this space is adequate to support a huge number of potted plants, trellises and creepers. In flats with a long balcony running across the front half of the house, there's quite a bit of horizontal space available that can accommodate a number of pots and planters strewn around. A balcony like this can also have a climber such as a bougainvillea creeper draped over the railing. But there should be some order in the way the planters are arranged, or the overall space could end up looking cluttered. One could also hang a few pots from the balcony roof and walls, but don't go overboard and make the balcony look like a tropical jungle.²



Apartment Gardening

If you've been wanting to try your hand at gardening, the constricted space of an apartment might be best for you. The first consideration for an apartment garden is its location. If your apartment comes with a small or medium-sized patio or balcony, you could set out your pots there where they will be out of your way and will get enough sunlight. But if you don't have this luxury, try fixing your plants in the window.

Growing beautiful plants: Grow your plants in containers-whether flowers, herbs or vegetables. Choose terracotta pots and paint them the way you like and liven up your window. Add a drainage hole at the bottom and you will immediately bring color to your room.

Scheme and color: Once you've set up your containers, you're sure to want to plan a scheme for your garden. Perhaps country or modern; simple or exotic? See that your containers match with each other.

Get rid of clutter: Be aware of any clutter that might be developing in your newly-constructed garden. Instead of having a large variety of plants in a small space, concentrate on the bare minimum and arrange larger ones around them. Among the larger ones, you could choose the Japanese maple that can adapt to life in a container.

Be creative: Your containers needn't hold just one kind of plant, but since plants have a symbiotic relationship with other plants, you can combine different kinds of plants in the same window or container and watch them grow beautifully. This will give you an opportunity to practice companion planting, for example, you can easily grow roses with garlic together.

Choose the right size: Choose the size of your containers depending on what you want to grow. If you grow small single plants, don't use very large containers, and if you use small containers for large plants, it will restrict their growth. Besides, small containers take up lesser water and will need frequent watering. You could avert this problem by layering some pebbles, mulch, or shavings over the soil to help retain the moisture.

² http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1839/creating_an_apartment_garden.html

Climate: Though all plants can grow in containers, there are some that absolutely thrive in them. Take for instance, annuals. They don't need much water in winter and you can change them with more frequency than other plants.

Depending on where you live and your climatic conditions, you could also find cacti and succulents not just thriving but adding a lot of variety and color to your container garden without the bother of looking after or much watering. Herbs are a good choice, since they are practical and can be used in your kitchen.

So don't ever run away with the feeling that life in an apartment means being away from growing your own plants. There is an option close at hand, all you have to do is to hold it with both hands and make the best of it.

Container Gardening

Are you living in an apartment or a small area? Do you want to have a mobile garden that moves with you when you move out from the apartment? Then, container gardening is the best choice you can go for. Gardening your plants in containers offers you the flexibility to create your own mobile garden. How best you can do container gardening depends on how creative you are.

Container gardening is the perfect idea for apartments and small areas. That's why it is also popular as 'apartment gardening'. In fact you can do container gardening along with your routine gardening on garden beds. Container gardening adds a lot of variety to your gardening routine.

Here we give you some ideas and tips on creating and maintaining your own best container garden.

Finding the RIGHT container

For containers, which is right and which is not, there is no restriction. You can go for any option, but make sure your choice container provides adequate drainage for your plants. In fact, you can use old buckets, discarded kitchen pots or even baskets. If you want to have a formal garden, then go for more traditional containers. The thing you need to keep in mind – your containers should not be too big or too small for your planting.

The best soil for your container garden

Because your garden soil is too heavy and also dries out too quickly, it is not the right choice for your container gardening. Also, it fails to provide the necessary nutrients to the plants. Instead, get required potting soil from your local garden center. Otherwise you can make potting soil on your own by including soil, sand, peat and a slow release fertilizer.



Garden Trivia

- Wheat is the most widely grown plant in the world. It has been cultivated for more than 7,000 years in every continent except Antarctica.

- The compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*) is so-called because its lower leaves tend to line up in a north-south direction.

- Botanically, there is no such thing as a pumpkin. Pumpkins are certain varieties of squash, which through local traditions and use, have come to be called pumpkins. Squash and pumpkins belong to the family 'Cucurbitaceae', which also contains cucumbers, melons and gourds.

- The onion is a lily, botanically. Asparagus is also a member of the lily family. The name "asparagus" comes from a Greek word meaning "sprout"

- The eggplant is a member of the potato family, and is also known as a garden egg, melanzana or aubergine.

- A tomato is a fruit, but it is legally known as a vegetable. In 1893, a case went before the US Supreme Court about importing tomatoes from the West Indies. Fruits could be imported tax-free, vegetables couldn't. Since tomatoes were eaten with main dishes and not as desserts, the Court ruled them to be a vegetable.

- There are more than 1,000 varieties of tomatoes currently being grown in the U.S.

- The average American eats 13 pounds of tomatoes a year (plus 20 pounds a year in the form of ketchup, salsa, soup, and BBQ sauce).

- The biggest tomato on record weighed in at a hefty 7 pounds 12 ounces. It was grown by Gordon Graham of Oklahoma.

- Cool as a cucumber? It's true ... the inside of a cucumber on the vine measures as much as 20 degrees cooler than the outside air on a warm day.

- Asparagus and rhubarb are the only vegetables that can reproduce on their own for several growing seasons. All other vegetables must be replanted every year.

- Potatoes are the most popular vegetable among Americans. Second and third place go to head lettuce and onions.

- The Daisy got its name because the yellow center resembled the sun. It was commonly known as the "day's eye" and over time, was eventually called daisy.

- The world's largest flower, *Rafflesia*, can measure up to three feet across.

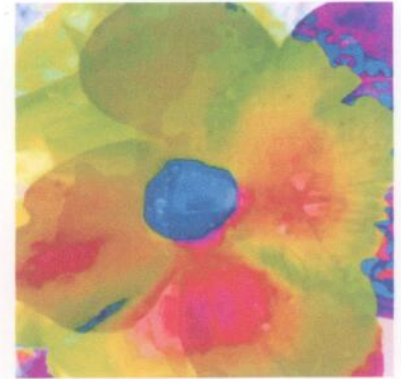
- One tree can remove 26 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually, equaling 11,000 miles of car emissions. Landscape plants, such as shrubs and turf, remove smoke, dust, and other pollutants from the air. One study showed that 1 acre of trees has the ability to remove 13 tons of particles and gases annually.



- The "Fireweed" was the first plant to bloom in areas that were destroyed by the 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helens.
- The Saguaro Cactus, found in the Southwestern United States, doesn't grow branches until it is 75 years old.
- If a spider dismantles her web, that means a bad storm is near.
- Fire ants mate while flying. An average colony of fire ants has approximately 250,000 to 300,000 ants. Queens, which live from five to seven years, can lay up to 2,000 eggs per day.

If caterpillars are seen in late fall, predict a mild winter.

- The Monarch Butterfly will only lay its eggs on the milkweed plant, and the milkweed is the only plant the caterpillars will feed on.
- A Humming bird is the only bird known that can fly backwards.
- The average Humming bird weighs less than a penny.
- A hummingbird will feed at over 1,500 flowers in an average day.
- A snail can sleep for 3 years.
- A dragonfly has a life span of 24 hours.
- Only female mosquitoes bite and drink blood. Male mosquitoes do not bite; they are vegetarians, and feed on the nectar of flowers.
- Mosquito repellents don't actually repel. The spray blocks the mosquito's sensors so they don't know you're there.
- Mosquitoes are attracted to the color blue more than any other color.
- The smallest mammal in the world is Thailand's Kitti's hog-nosed bat, which is about the size of a bumblebee. One bat can catch over 1,000 mosquitoes in an hour.
- Wood Frogs freeze during the winter and thaw again in the spring to begin breeding.
- The city of Mt. Vernon, Washington ... grows more tulips than the entire country of Holland.
- Eighty percent of the world's rose species come from Asia.
- Bananas are considered the world's largest herb. They are related to the lily and orchid family.
- Rosemary, sage, oregano, thyme and marjoram all belong to the mint plant family.
- Every plant in Tomorrowland at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, is edible.
- The "Easter rabbit" was a sacred companion of Eostre, the Northern Goddess of Spring. Easter was traditionally a time of rejoicing that growing things were reborn in spring.
- Babe Ruth wore a cabbage leaf under his cap to keep cool. He changed it every two innings.



Apartment and Container Gardening Quiz: True or False

1. Container plants can be killed or diseased if there is not adequate drainage.
True or False
2. You cannot garden properly if your space is less than 2000 sq. ft
True or False
3. If you do not have a balcony you can use the window as an alternative.
True or False
4. All plants will do slightly poorer if using the container method.
True or False
5. Container gardening is the best choice for mobility, if you are planning on moving.
True or False
6. There are certain containers for garden usage, things like old buckets will make the plants die.
True or False
7. Wheat is the most widely grown plant, and has been cultivated for more than 7000 years.
True or False
8. A tomato is a vegetable by nature.
True or False
9. There are 3 varieties of tomato
True or False
10. A humming bird is the only known bird that can fly backwards.
True or False

Apartment and Container Gardening Quiz Answers: True or False

1. True

2. False

3. True

4. False- some types thrive

5. True

6. False

7. True

8. False- legally and vegetable, but technically a fruit

9. False- 1000 types currently being grown in the US

10. True