

Ideas from Our Container Garden

By Laura Mellow and Judy Hiner, Master Gardeners

The guiding focus of the Container Garden is that of a true Demonstration Garden—showing visitors ideas they may not have considered, modeling plant groupings, and displaying plants that do well in containers in our climate.

Many people who want to garden in containers do so because either they have a small space, they are renters and cannot put in permanent plantings, or their hardscape has no areas of soil for in-ground plants. Containers are also a good way to bring plants closer to your outdoor living areas. There are so many plants that adapt well to containers. Vines are greatly under-utilized in containers, and can provide a softening of solid walls on a patio and moderate reflected heat. Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), Mexican Sunflower (*Tithonium diversifolia*), Purple Lilac Vine (*Hardenbergia violacea*), and Pink Jasmine (*Jasminum polyanthum*) show that vines can also have colorful flowers while providing a green background.



In the Container Garden we have been thinking outside the box, er...container, to create interesting displays of plants. A large terracotta container, which ended up in several pieces was reconstructed into a “broken pot” garden with spiral pockets of soil and planted with various succulents—recycling at its best. Another display using an old wooden pallet, some burlap, and landscape cloth, created a vertical garden, which currently holds strawberries and marigolds, but could as well contain various herbs, if space is at a premium. A new addition is a picture frame box containing succulents that could be hung on a wall.

Groupings of plants include: a salsa garden area, with tomato, basil, chives, peppers, and other herbs; an area of more drought-tolerant plants such as yuccas; and a shade area against the building with coleus and a Giant Philodendron. Visitors can find a microclimate similar to their own yards and see what container plants could work there.

Many people enjoy combining plants that complement each other into one larger pot. With a “thriller” (taller or eye-catching) plant such as Corkscrew Rush (*Juncus effusus 'Spiralis'*), a “filler” such as Summer Snapdragon (*Angelonia gardnerii*), and a “spiller” such as Creeping Wire Vine (*Muehlenbeckia axillaris*) to drape over the edge, visitors can see that design standard in action.

As the Container Garden evolves each season, visitors should leave with the idea that everything they see can be accomplished by the average person at home, and think, “I can do that!”

Stop by our Demonstration Gardens at 4210 N. Campbell Ave between 8:30 and 4:30 to see the Container Garden and 13 other unique gardens.



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Photo by Dale Windham