

CAN YOU DIG IT?

CONTAINER GARDENING

Q&A

1. **Are rocks needed for draining?**

I do not recommend rocks in the bottom of the pot for drainage. There are better filters to use such as a layer of landscape fabric. Rocks take up valuable soil space and soil holds the water and nutrients.

2. **What are the best herbs to grow in a container garden? (Easiest to take care of, which herbs grow well together in a small space with little sunlight)**

All herbs grow just fine in containers. Some are preferred that way such as mint, which can spread. Good shade herbs are mint, chives, parsley and thyme although most herbs do prefer good amounts of sun.

3. **Are real whiskey barrels ok for planting vegetables? I have old, half whiskey barrels and when wet they still have a strong whiskey smell. I've used them for shrubs and flowers, but curious if they're ok for edibles.**

I have not seen any research done on that so I cannot guide you definitively, but I suspect it is OK based on the fact that we can ingest whiskey?

4. **What is the time of year and way to transplant bamboo from rhizomes that are traveling from a neighbor's yard?**

Suggestions for fast growing Ohio trees or scrubs to use for privacy in a backyard city garden. Suggestions for trees [CLICK HERE](#) for advice on transplanting bamboo. Privet and arbor vitae are good choices of species for privacy and come in many varieties. I like redbud trees in the landscape.

5. **How do I fight/prevent worms in Brussels Sprouts and cabbage? How do I keep the birds from topping/pulling up my pepper plants? We do a combo of container and in-ground gardening, and although I have grown beautiful peppers all my life, at this location I have failed in both containers and in ground due to birds and water problems. Help! We know how to cure blossom end rot on tomatoes. Is there any way to prevent it?**

We would need to make an identification of any pest first and then we make a plan for management. I use bird netting on my container garden to keep out nuisance wildlife and it does a great job. Prevention of blossom end rot in containers is to first have a large enough size container for the plant so that you have enough soil to hold water and fertility

and then fertilize with a complete fertilizer prior to planting. Roma tomato varieties are known for blossom end rot and I do not plant them due to this.

- 6. How to prevent "damping off" of seeds started indoors? How long do seeds last? Can I use those seeds from 2018? Does it depend upon the species? When to add fertilizer after starting seeds indoors? At this time of the year, is it better to start seeds indoors, or outdoors with row covers?**

To prevent damping off, use brand new seed starter mix each time you plant and make sure there is good air circulation. [CLICK HERE](#) for a link on seed viability. I fertilize once the first true leaves appear. You can plant both indoors and outdoors right now and I am doing that as well.

- 7. Can you grow carrots, radishes, and onions in a container? What vegetables are suitable for growing in containers?**

I grow all of those in containers. Almost any vegetable can be grown in a container, the trick is to make sure to get a container that is large enough to allow the plant to grow to maturity and produce a harvest over a long time period.

- 8. Do you plant on side of house that gets morning sun or afternoon sun - no shade at all for afternoon sun?**

You can plant almost any vegetable in half sun, but you want to pick a variety of the vegetable that has a faster maturation time to produce a harvest instead of one that takes a long time until harvest since you have less sun.

- 9. It's the first of May. Is it too late to start a container garden?**

Nope! You can start one almost any time of the year depending on what you want to plant.

- 10. I have a fairly shaded backyard, what types of crops can I grow? Can you discuss the various light requirements for popular crops?**

A minimum of 8 hours is needed for most vegetable and fruit. If you have lots of shade, I recommend searching for a local community garden to plant in. I have lots of shade and that is what I did.

- 11. When I have grown green bell peppers in a container, they are always very small. Someone mentioned adding antacid tablets to the soil. Does this work?**

I would not add antacid tablets to the soil. I would make sure that the container is large enough to handle a full-grown pepper at maturity that is producing fruit and then provide the fertilizer that plant needs for its life span.

12. I have a highly shaded yard (woods) and my decks get only a little sun. What vegetables will be more successful in these conditions?

A minimum of 8 hours is needed for most vegetable and fruit. If you have lots of shade, I recommend searching for a local community garden to plant in. I have lots of shade and that is what I did.

13. I would love suggestions for fast growing ornamentals---preferably perennials. Also, any special hints regarding herbs, which I use a lot?

We are talking about doing an herb class upcoming and that will be one of the voting choices. Herbs are generally pretty easy to grow if provided the proper light and soil environment. Most ornamentals are not super rapid growers right off the bat but consider coneflowers, lilac, or butterfly weed, which are also pollinator attractors.

14. I always thought that plastic pots are not good to use as the plastic will leach into the soil. True?

There is the potential for plastic to break down into the soil, but I have not seen any research showing if the plastic is taken up into the plant.

15. Any good tips on keeping the sides of the containers from getting too hot in direct sun? I have large pots on my deck with an open railing. The sides seem to steam cook some of my plants at the hottest part of the summer. I can't really put smaller plants in front of them. Is there really short shade cloth in rolls maybe?

They do sell shade cloth in rows and that might be a good choice. I have the same problem with mine. I put mulch on the top of the container soil to cool the soil and slow down evaporative loss as well.

16. What kind of plants in containers can I bring inside in the fall under grow lights and keep getting fruit and veg?

You might keep getting production from eggplant or peppers. Some herbs would do well that way as well such as parsley or basil. Most veg in containers will be extremely heavy and will need large light sources to keep them alive at full maturity so factor both of those into your plans.

17. In your opinion, what grows best in containers? What are your "go-tos"?

Almost all veg grow good in containers if you size the container correctly. My go-tos are lettuce, bok choy and spinach.

18. How to provide proper drainage for container gardens?

You need to control the drainage in pots with holes with a filter so that they can drain but not drain too fast. Or you could use grow bags which do that for you.

19. Budget friendly soil options for containers?

Budget friendly would be to order in bulk as that gives you the most soil bang for the buck.

20. Can we re-use soil left in containers from last year?

Generally, yes, unless there is no soil left and only roots, then you have to start over.

21. 1) Will using clean empty soda cans as "fillers" in large containers affect plants? 2) Which veggies are best suited for containers? 3) Are buckets suitable for use as planters?

1) I do not recommend fillers in pots as the soil is what holds on to water and nutrients and fillers decrease that. 2) Correct sizing of containers to the plant at maturity and in production is what is needed for success. 3) Almost any veggie does okay in a container if you follow that guide.

22. What do you suggest for container plants that you keep inside for winter and want to transition outside for summer?

I suggest you have a large enough container to maintain year-round growth as well as provide the needed nutrition for year-round growth.

23. I always have problems with the plant's drainage from the pot. What is the best approach to this?

The drainage needs to be controlled. I suggest a filter over the drain holes instead of rocks or mulch. Or the use of grow bags. You also need a large enough container as the soil in the container is what holds the water.

24. How do you know when to transplant flowers to a bigger container? What does root bound mean?

Pot bound means the roots have grown all the way to the pot limits and are wrapping around the inside of the pot. That there is decreased available soil. It is good to transplant prior to this.

25. Can you use soil from your woods or yard in container gardens?

You might be able to, but I do not recommend it. Start with soil with no weeds or disease and you will have better success.

26. Can/should I reuse soil in patio planter pots if I had disease problems in the past (on tomato)?

I would not use it for tomato for at least three years. That is proper amount of time in crop rotation to minimize disease spread.

27. What is the best way to "overwinter" a container plant? For example, I recently purchased an "ice plant," which says it's a perennial for up to -20f. Would I just leave it alone on the patio over the winter? Place it in my shed or garage? Bury the container in some mulch to keep the ceramic pot a bit warmer during the winter, etc.?

I always struggle with getting through winters with my container plants :) Best technique generally is dependent on what variety of plant you are growing. The ice plant that I am familiar with is a succulent that is not a good outdoor plant, perhaps this is different than what you referenced?

28. Could you please talk a bit about how to optimally grow/maintain herbs like basil, mint, and cilantro in a raised bed (location, spacing, watering, etc.)?

The basil and mint always seem to thrive, while the cilantro struggles. Provide lots of organic matter to the soil, make sure to address fertility so that they have the nutrition needed to grow and make sure to use fresh seed for best germination. The individual plant packets have the spacing needs. I would plant mint in a container due to its invasive spread. If you plant basil transplants, space them about a foot apart.

29. Cherry tomato, which one is the best and easiest?

There is no best one and most are easy to grow. I recommend you try growing a few to see which you like best.

30. Please include any special tips for balcony gardening. I have a 11' x 7' covered balcony but if I put the plants up against the railing, the plants can get sun almost all day.

Keep them in sun as much as possible, watch for them drying out and be careful when trying to move them.