

Spruce up your Fall Planters

By the time fall rolls around, we're often ready for a new look for our outdoor planters. The good news is that there are fantastic choices for decorative as well as productive plants that thrive in the cooler fall weather. Let's look at the ingredients needed for container success!



Choose a container

Carry the “green” theme into your garden by recycling unused items into planters. Look around your garage or basement and you’re sure to find some inspired ideas! An old charcoal grill or hibachi may become an herb garden or an aged whiskey barrel may showcase splashy fall annuals and perennials. A beat-up work boot... a dented metal watering can... use your imagination to find a creative and inexpensive container!

Once you’ve selected a container, make sure it’s prepped for success:

- Clean old containers.
- Create drainage holes – if there aren’t currently holes in the bottom of your container, drill a few holes to allow water to escape through the bottom. You don’t want to have standing water in your pot – the roots won’t like it at all!
- Add a few inches of drainage material in the bottom of the container. Typically clean, loose gravel or shards of pottery are used for this purpose.



A few inches of clean gravel in the bottom of the container allows for better drainage in your container.

- In keeping with the recycling theme, use packing peanuts or empty soda bottles (with the lids screwed on) in the bottom of the container instead of rocks. These items work especially well in large planters – they help keep the weight down if you want to move your container around or bring it into the garage on those nights when frost threatens. Since plant roots only need 6” – 8” of soil depth, you can use the lightweight filler for anything deeper than that in your pot.

- If your container has large side vents or bottom holes that will allow soil to spill out, cover them with a coffee filter that will allow water to flow out while leaving the potting mix inside.



Use a coffee filter to cover large openings that will allow soil to spill out of container.

Success in a bag!

Unfortunately there isn't a bag of goods that can provide instant container success, but buying a good bag of potting mix is the first step on the road to healthy, happy container gardens. Make sure to check the back of the bag to review the mix ingredients. Premium potting mixes, such as the Jolly Gardener Premium Potting Mixes sold at Blue Max Materials, often contain the following ingredients:

- Canadian sphagnum peat moss that has high water-holding and aeration properties.
- Composted bark and/or forest products to ensure low-water retention and improve stability.
- Perlite to help improve drainage and increase aeration.
- Limestone to balance the soil's pH and help plant roots take up nutrients.
- A wetting agent to help the soil absorb water and evenly distribute it to plant roots.

- And controlled-release fertilizers which are polymer-coated and gradually feed plants for continuous blooms and growth.

Add your potting soil to the container, covering the drainage material and filling it to within a couple of inches of the top rim. Gently pat the mix to remove air pockets.

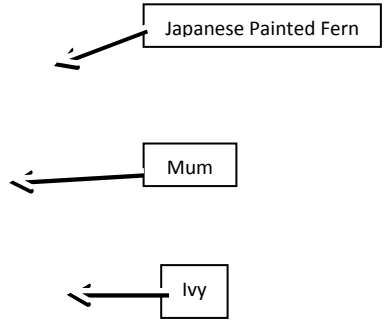
Spillers, Thrillers & Fillers

Mixing and matching plants within a container is half the fun of container gardening. When buying plants, keep in mind to match plants that prefer similar amounts of moisture and sunlight and buy spillers, thrillers and fillers for maximum aesthetic appeal.

- Spillers – plants that drape over the sides of containers to provide flow and movement.
- Thrillers – these beauties add not only height but pizzazz to a container.
- Fillers – these do as their name implies, they fill the space with their blooms and foliage.

When you visit your garden center to choose plants, either take the planter with you or bring its measurements along. Simulate the way your pot will look by grouping plants together and selecting some of each of spillers, thrillers and fillers!

One possible combination uses primarily perennials allowing you to fill in with a few annuals, such as fall pansies, as the seasons change:



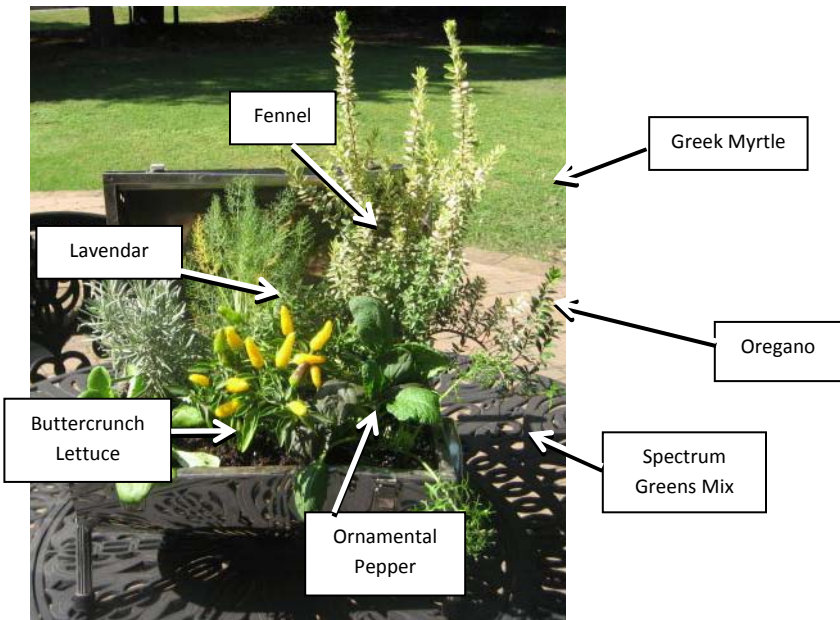
Thrillers

- Mum
- Sedum

Fillers

- Painted Japanese Fern
- Coral Bell
- Croton

Another possible combination groups a variety of herbs and fall vegetables:



Thrillers

- Ornamental Pepper
- Greek Myrtle

Fillers

- Lavendar
- Buttercrunch Lettuce
- Fennel

An old work boot planted with basil makes a unique container!



Other possible fall plant options include:

| <u>Perennials</u> | <u>Annuals</u> | <u>Herbs</u> |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grasses • Smokebush • Lambs ear • Creeping Jenny • Hens and chicks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flowering cabbages • Flowering kales • Annual grasses • Sages • Flaxes • Pansies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basil • Cilantro • Dill • Parsley • Rosemary |

Water your container!

During the hot summer days, we all know daily watering is essential to the survival of our containers! In the fall, water may not be needed on a daily basis, so the simplest test to determine if your plants need watering is to push your finger

an inch or so into the soil – if it feels dry, it’s time to water! Sometimes that may mean watering every day and sometimes it may mean every few days – it all depends on the weather.

The soil mixture in your container also plays a part in determining watering needs. Using a planting mix specifically made for containers is better than using a garden soil or general use soil. Potting mixes are formulated with specific ingredients that help plants thrive in their contained environment. This includes providing proper drainage and aeration as well as ingredients that help the soil retain and distribute moisture evenly.

Some potting mixes even include water absorbing polymers that store up moisture and evenly distribute it as the soil begins to dry. They reduce the amount of water needed and help prevent over-and-under watering.

Jolly Gardener Premium Potting Mixes are an excellent choice for containers; the blends have been thoroughly researched and tested to provide optimum growing mediums. Jolly Gardener Premium Potting Mix and Jolly Gardener Premium Moisture Mate Potting Mix and Jolly Gardener Garden Soil (suitable for larger gardens) are available at Blue Max Materials.



Adding mulch to your container can also help. Mulch insulates roots and provides protection from direct sunlight, helping to hold in moisture and keep out UV rays.