

# Successful Container Gardening by Erin Harlow

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## Plant Selection

- Decide where the pot is going to be before selecting plants.
  - Select plants based on color combination, sun or shade requirements, and watering needs.
  - Try and combine plants with similar watering requirements.
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## Soil Mixes and Planting

- Soil mix: 2 parts peat, 1 part builders sand, 1 part perlite
  - If the pot is large and will be very heavy when full of soil, try using something to fill the space such as packing peanuts, lava rocks, or plastic bottles.
  - Avoid small textured or heavy soil which holds more water.
  - The final level of soil in the pot should be 1" to 2" below the rim of the container.
  - Mulch can be used, but is not normally in containers where the plants will cover the surface.
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## Maintenance

- Drainage water should be eliminated with the use of a tray.
- Most containers will need to be watered at least 3 times per week.
- Micro-irrigation can be helpful to water plants.
- A complete fertilizer with micronutrients should be applied at weak rates if a liquid fertilizer is used every two weeks or a granular slow-release fertilizer can be used two to three times a year.
- Encourage new blooms by removing old blooms on a regular basis.
- Trimming plants or "pinching" can help keep them bushy and full.



## Design

- Use a large anchor plant in the center of the pot to create height and interest.
- Plant in odd numbers and include a thriller, spillers, and fillers.
- Large leaved plants provide interest and add texture.
- Ornamental grasses and bamboos add movement.
- Place pots in groups of 3 or 5 for bigger impact.
- Use interesting containers and don't be afraid to experiment with different kinds of containers.
- Use brighter colored pots and plants in shade.
- Consider incorporating vegetables and herbs.
- Don't forget to remove tired plants and replace with fresh season appropriate plants.

## Hot Color Combinations

- Combine plants with reds, oranges, and yellows.
- Purple-leaved plants mixed with plants with chartreuse yellow or silver leaves stand out.
- Examples include: Colocasia 'black magic' (elephant ears) and ornamental sweet vine 'margarita'

## Cool Color Combinations

- Combine plants with blue, purple, or pink flowers or leaves.
- Include silver colored plants in shady areas.

## Thrillers

- Usually include large plants with interesting texture.
- Examples include: ornamental grasses, bamboos, colocasias (elephant ears), small trees or shrubs, large succulents, large flowering plants

## Fillers

- Include plants with interesting texture, can be spillers as well.
- Generally smaller than the tall thriller plants.
- Examples include: geraniums, petunias, impatiens, calibrachoa, caladiums, dusty miller, coleus

## Spillers

- Include trailing plants
- Examples include: ornamental sweet potato vine 'margarita' or 'blackie', purple trailing lantana, lobularia 'snow princess', blue dazes

