

CONTAINER GARDENING WITH CHILDREN

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Growing plants in containers is a great way to introduce children to the wonders of gardening. Container gardening does not have to be limited to traditional terra-cotta pots. With a little imagination and a few minor adjustments, all sorts of interesting items can be transformed into eye-catching garden containers. Reusing items you have also helps to reinforce benefits of recycling.

The choice of containers is endless. Some are more suited to the outdoors, while others are better indoors, on lanais or porches.

Be creative! Almost any type of container can be used. The only requirements are that they must hold enough soil, and that you can adapt it to provide adequate drainage. If you can't, or don't want to, drill drainage holes, try using it as a cache pot rather than planting directly into it. A cache pot is a cover-up or hiding place for other pots.

Here are some ideas for creative container gardens:

- ◆ Grapevine wreaths stacked around a plastic ice-cream bucket create a container with a woody look.

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- ◆ Well-worn cowboy boots make a cozy home for cacti.
- ◆ An old wagon is perfect for bright annuals.
- ◆ An old metal colander hung from a tree branch is a suitable planter for shade-loving plants.
- ◆ A chipped serving bowl can have a second life as a container for growing herbs.
- ◆ A trio of coffee cans can be decorated in lively colors to match flowering plants.
- ◆ The simplest container is a plastic bag of soil.

When transforming something into a container for growing plants, you need to follow a few simple guidelines:

- ◆ Make sure you have enough room for soil. Keep in mind that small volumes of soil will dry out very quickly, which means more watering.
- ◆ Avoid putting metal or dark containers in

full sun.

- ◆ Give the plant adequate drainage so its roots aren't in water.

Creating a 'pillow-pack' garden with your children

You will need the following items:

- ◆ Resealable plastic bags – quart or gallon, depending on plants chosen,
 - ◆ Potting Soil.
 - ◆ Plants or seeds.
 - ◆ Craft knife or scissors – for parent to use.
 - ◆ Craft stick or wooden spoon for making planting hole.
 - ◆ Water.
1. Fill plastic bag with potting soil.
 2. Seal well.
 3. With craft knife, or scissors, cut an 'X' in center on the top side. The size of the cut will vary, depending on size of bag and size of plant, but should not be more than 4 inches total.
 4. If planting seeds, plant about 1/16 of an inch deep.
 5. If using small plants, make a planting hole with craft stick or spoon handle, being careful not to puncture bottom of bag.
 6. Insert plant, taking care not to damage roots.
 7. Cut drainage holes in the bottom of the plastic bag. Make the holes about one-half inch long. The number of drainage holes you cut will depend on the size of the bag you are using. Cut at least three drainage holes for smaller bags and at least six holes for larger bags. Make the holes evenly spaced from each other so that all areas of the bottom of the bag will drain.
 8. Water to moisten soil. Do not over water.
 9. Set in sunny location. Water as necessary so soil is not allowed to completely dry out.

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