



Containers
Dianne and Gary Westlake
Peterborough and Area Master Gardeners

Every year we plant up seven large pots along the edge of our balcony and some years it works while in other years, it is less than spectacular.

For the first few years, we planted wave petunias. They can be wonderful for part of the summer, but sometimes they look a bit tired, especially if we go away for a few days or forget to give them the water they need.

One year the petunias did not do well from the start, so last year we tried a new geranium variety called 'Rocky Mountain'. They come in a variety of colours but we tried one that was fire engine red. They were amazing. Our pots are about 18 inches square and only takes one plant to fill the space. They bloomed all season right up until frost and the blooms were huge. These geraniums were very tolerant of dry conditions, so we could leave for a few days with no ill effects. We kept cuttings from the original plants over the winter, indoors and this year they are just as wonderful, although they took a few additional weeks to come to full bloom.

When you buy plants from the nursery, they are usually further along so your pots are showy earlier in the season but if you are prepared to wait a couple more weeks, you can do it yourself.

We have always had difficulty growing Coleus in the ground for some reason. This year, we tried putting several varieties in the same pot. When you use different varieties of the same plant in a pot, there is little danger of one plant taking over. We also made a pot of three varieties of Heuchera. Both these experiments were successful.

We have a couple of large urns at the entrance to our garden and each year we struggle with what to plant in them. This year we put what we thought were red Canna Lilies in the middle and to our disgust, they shot up six feet above the pot and bloomed out of scale and orange to boot. Sometimes we have surprises.

Another great choice for pots that was suggested to us by Victoria Whitney of Griffins Greenhouses is dragon wing begonias. They trail over the edge of the pot and bloom solidly through the whole season. This year the cooler temperatures have affected the growth rate but they are still a great choice.

This year we tried planting some pots with basil, parsley, and rosemary because, when we grew them in the garden, they were so far away that they never seemed to make it to the kitchen. We were given a

pepper plant by a friend and we put it in a pot since peppers were always a challenge for us. It now has three yellow peppers ready to pick.

When you are creating pots, here are a few hints. Get the biggest pots you can handle and fill them with fresh potting medium. This is not soil, it is sterile and is just there to hold the roots in place. You have to provide the nutrients to your containers by fertilizing. A good plan is to fertilize at least weekly, weakly, using half or quarter strength of what the fertilizer container recommends. If you use small pots, you are going to have to water more frequently, probably daily if not more.

It is also a good idea to keep plants that like the same conditions together. A container that is going into the shade, should only have shade-tolerant plants.

Pots and containers are a great way to fill dead areas in your garden. You can move them around so that when your perennials are finished flowering, the containers take over.

It is also a good idea to plant for more than one season. Once fall comes around and your containers start looking tired, replant them with mums or flowering kale. Then for the winter, as long as the pot is frost tolerant (fiberglass or plastic), leave the potting mix in place and stick evergreen bows in them. These will last all winter since they are dormant.

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