

THE ENRICHMENT PROJECT

Badge Program

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CONTAINER GARDENING

Steps

1. Planning — the first step.

Brainstorm on paper the perfect container(s). Will you plant one plant per container or multiple plants in one? Do you want to create a cohesive grouping or a single focus point?

What is your style? Do you enjoy lots of color, sticking to one family of color or monochromatic tones? Do you want one shape or the look of chaotic fun?

What particular challenges will you have with your containers? Where will you place them? Will you need to move your containers? Will you be placing them indoors or outdoors — on a roof or accentuating an outdoor area?

Do your planning on paper for placement, groupings and the overall design of your container garden. Make sure you incorporate available sunlight, water resources and drainage into your design.

2. Adding to your garden.

Sometimes you need more than just plants to make a garden. Moving water, rocks, gazing balls, statuary or a number of other items can be incorporated into your container garden. Explore ways to add interest to your garden beyond plants and pots.

3. Zones and climates.

Find out what zone you live in. Planting zones can vary a bit with the resource consulted, so double-check your zone with a local nursery or extension office. Remember you may need to adjust your zone because the containers don't hold heat like the ground. List or sketch at least six kinds of plants for your zone, annotated with their names (common and scientific) and any challenges they might pose. Pick three to try.

4. Subscribe to seed catalogs.

A quick search online will give you a long list of places that mail out seed / plant catalogs at least once a year. Even if you are completing this badge program during an off-season, you can cut out pictures of your favorites that are relevant to your zone and plan for spring. Note any similarities and differences between your choices.

5. Explore universities.

Many online universities feature horticultural / agricultural information for free. Search online and find additional information on the plants you are thinking of growing as well as the garden you are designing.



Container Gardening

Think container gardening is as easy as dropping some soil and a seed in a container? It might be. Then again, this simple solution may result with a plant that has a very short life. Container gardens take a lot of planning and care to keep plants healthy.

Let's start digging!



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6. Soils and additives.

Research the qualities of and the differences in potting soils and additives (mulch, plant food, etc.). What do each of these have in common? What are the differences and why are the variations important? What kinds of soil / additives will work best in your area?

Are you going organic? If so, what special considerations do you need to put into place?

7. Light requirements.

Plants need different amounts of light. Considering your plans from Step 1, determine the light you will have available so you can determine whether the plants you want to have can grow in your area.

8. Pot considerations.

Style is a personal choice. Smaller pots mean more watering and transplanting, possibly damaging your plants roots. You may want a sealed pot to help minimize damage due to weather. Plastic may become brittle over time. Your pot should have a minimum of one drainage hole. Explore the variety of pots available to you. Take note of where you will be placing the pot(s), weather and other factors into your final container choice.

9. Drainage.

Examine your container(s). Is proper drainage designed into your pot? Would raising your beds help your drainage? Explore how you might adjust your pot itself or how it is placed to make it drain — or even if you need to get a different pot.

10. Reuse, recycle and repurpose.

Explore ideas for creative non-traditional containers, including terrariums. Make a list of ten things not generally considered to be a “flowerpot” that you can utilize as a container.

11. Decorating your pots.

Decorate your chosen containers — from simple terra cotta pots to cut down milk cartons. Do you need to use special paints? Are rhinestones your bling of choice? Look in books or online for ideas.

12. Identification.

Make some plant stakes to identify each kind of seed / plant in your container. It can match your container or be something completely different. Share your technique(s) for making them.

13. Your vegetables.

Research the needs of your chosen vegetables. Discover how your chosen vegetables reproduce and start new plants to share or expand your garden. Try growing plants from your produce leftovers like pits and seeds.

14. Your herbs.

Research the needs of your chosen herbs. Start your seedlings as directed and place in your pots.

15. Your flowers.

Research the needs of your chosen flowers. Decide if you want annuals or perennials. Perhaps you'd like a combination of the two.

16. Your cacti.

Research the needs of your chosen cacti. What unique considerations need to be addressed for these plants?

17. Your non-flowering plants.

Research the needs of your non-flowering plants. Will you need additional support for vines or long-stemmed plants?



18. The real thing.

Plant your garden, making sure that you use the right plants and soil, and account for your plant's drainage issues. Document the planting in a way of your choosing so you can refer to it later.

19. Keepin' them green.

Set up a schedule for maintenance of your container garden. What needs to be done and how often? Write your schedule in your calendar or planner to keep it accessible. Include what needs to be done for winterizing and storing your containers, if necessary.

20. Progression.

Every week, document the progress of your container. Take a picture or sketch the plants current look. Keep them all together as a progression, so you have a record of your container's life.

21. No pest zone.

You may want to keep pests off your plants. Research natural and chemical ways to do this. Determine what works best for you and your garden.

22. Give them a helping hand.

Some plants may need additional support through cages or sticks. Watch your plants and help them grow to their full potential.

23. Packaging to share.

Design your own packaging for any part(s) of your plants you wish to share. This may include:

- Seed packets
- Tomato baskets
- Dried flower cone
- Fresh flower wrapping
- Clipping cups

Be creative with your choices.

24. Heirloom plants and seed exchanges.

Research the terms "heirloom plants" and "seed exchanges" online. How can you get involved with trading seeds with others? Where can you find heirloom plants? What makes heirloom plants special?

25. Community garden.

Are others interested in gardening but don't have the time? Find others and start a community garden. Be sure everyone is responsible for the different parts of planting, watering and garden maintenance.

26. Fruits of your labors.

Share your garden. Research what you can do with your crop. Are there local charities that take donations or a local family who could use a bag of fresh vegetables? A local hospital or nursing home that might appreciate some cut flowers? Provide seedlings so preschool children can tend and learn about plants? Implement one of your strategies.

27. Share the love.

Share your love of container gardening with others. Join an organization or start your own. Perhaps teach area youth how to start a single container garden.



Sites to Explore

www.makeandtakes.com/are-you-a-small-space-gardener

www.hgtv.com/topics/container-gardening

www.lowes.com/cd_Tips+for+Container+Gardening_1265388656_

urbanext.illinois.edu/containergardening

www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/article/0,,429816,00.html

www.southernliving.com/home-garden/gardens/creative-container-gardens-00417000074948

containergardening.about.com

www.sustainable-gardening.com

www.gardensimply.com

www.kidsgardening.com

Check out [Ira Raja's Enrichment Project](#) to start your own adventure.