

Easy Patio Gardens

By Sue Campbell

Patio gardens give you the best of both worlds, the beauty of a garden in an easy to manage size. Once you know the basics, you're ready to bring a little natural beauty to your outdoor space.

Deciding what to grow

No need to decide whether to plant food or ornamentals, modern gardeners plant veggies and flowers side by side. Make a list of the veggies you love to eat and the flowers you most love to see. Now take that list and head to the nursery to see which of your favorites will best match the amount of light and space you have available.

What you'll need

- Large flower pots or other containers with drainage holes
- Potting soil
- Bark chips, compost or small pebbles for mulch (holds in moisture and keeps out weeds)
- Plants of your choice
- Source of water

Assembling your container garden

Fill the containers halfway with soil. Water the plants thoroughly and carefully remove them from the temporary pots. Arrange them in your container, observing the spacing between plants indicated on the plant tag. Fill in with soil. In general, you want the soil to cover the root ball of the plant, but not the stem. Water the container. Cover the soil with the mulch of your choice, leaving a few inches of mulch free area around each plant.

Ongoing care

Container gardens quickly dry out in hot weather. Make watering easy on yourself by keeping two or more full watering cans near your garden. Check your plants once a day in hot weather, watering when the soil feels dry.

Following these simple steps, you'll soon be enjoying a beautiful mix of flowers and food right outside your door.