

Pot and Container Gardening Success

There are many reasons that people garden in pots. Some are purely aesthetic – creating a special feature, or enabling quick display changes. Others are practical - growing herbs close to the kitchen, controlling an invasive plant such as mint, growing plants not suited to your climate or soil. Other reasons reflect circumstances, such as lack of a garden, not being fit enough to dig, downsizing, keeping garden maintenance to a minimum or starting off as a gardener without too much expense. Container gardening is great for children, since it allows them to develop responsibility, indulge their own taste and learn about plants and gardening while keeping a reasonable limit to the size of the task. I know many avid gardeners who started out, and have continued, in pots.

Pot and container gardening requires planning and ongoing care. Choose pots that you really like and add others in various sizes and shapes to complement the group. Contrasts in colour, texture and shape work well to highlight different pots in a group. Alternatively using one type of pot, such as terracotta, can create a sense of unity in the group or across the whole garden and can reflect the overall garden style. What comes first – the pot or the plant? I would always select pots and place them first so that you know exactly the sort of plants you need.

Single, pairs and groups of pots can become special features. Make a statement at your house entry, soften the edge of the deck, create visual interest with a group of pots placed along a path edge, indicate changes in garden areas, place scented plants in pots beside seats or put a gaggle of pots planted with light or bright blooms under a tree. Think about sight, touch, taste and scent as you decide on positions for your pots.



Once you know where a pot will go, you can work out the growing conditions it will provide and select your plants. Larger pots hold more water and nutrients and can support larger plants and harsher sun and wind conditions. A large pot of creeping Turkish thyme would do well at a sunny doorway, creating a glorious display when it flowers. Pots of winter and spring bulbs look stunning under a deciduous tree – flowering when the tree is bare and then top planted with a low water shade happy ground cover for summer or simply left as an interesting collection of pots until the bulbs flower again. A hardy white flowering convolvulus cneorum in a pot will cover the septic tank inspection area and be readily moved to allow easy access.

Pots, thoughtfully placed and looked after, allow you to experiment with plants that would never survive in your garden. A friend has a wide west facing verandah, an oasis of shade, where she grows masses of interesting plants in containers, most of which would never survive in the open garden. Starting with the amount of light available, she can select plants and control all the other elements.

Here are some tips for successful pot and container gardening:

- Check the hole is big enough – water needs to be able to drain out of a pot.
- Choose the number and type of plants you grow in pots to suit your lifestyle. One lovely pot, succulents if you can't water, lighter pots so you can move them – choose what you can manage.
- Choose good quality potting mix selected to meet the needs of your plants. Fill the pots, leaving a space at the top to make a well for water. Mulch pots in summer.
- Plant each group of pots with plants that have the same water, light, frost and wind protection needs. Read and keep your plant labels.
- Feed your plants regularly – learn about the timing and type of food to suit each plant. Look for organic products so that beneficial organisms can assist in releasing nutrients.
- Let your plants get used to your climate and position by placing them there in the original pots for a few days before you plant.
- Plan for change – all plants have their up times and down times so be prepared to move pots around, cut back and tidy, alter watering regimes to suit the weather, move to protected spots, and accept when a plant has had its day and needs replacing.

We are pretty excited about pots at the moment because we have selected some lovely ones, along with some birdbaths, to sell. Gardening workshops are on the go so a lot is happening at the nursery.

Ring 0403 267 286 to book in for a workshops at the Garden Gate Nursery at Inverleigh

Garden Design and Planning – Sunday May 15th, 9 – 11.30, \$25, notes and morning tea.

Planning a Backyard Orchard – Sunday May 29th, 9 – 11.30, \$25, notes and morning tea

Orchard Pruning – Sunday July 17th, 9 – 12.30, \$35, theory and hands on practice in our orchard, notes and morning tea.

Happy gardening, Christine and Keith Windle,
0403 267 286 info@gardengatenursery.com.au

Garden Gate of Inverleigh www.gardengate.com.au
cnr Winchelsea Rd and McCallum Rd, Inverleigh