

## Bucket Gardening 101

Growing your own garden has many health benefits. Getting outside time with your family, growing healthy food to add to your diet, having fresh vegetables that are harvested when you are ready to eat,

### Why

- Extends the growing season. Great for high altitudes where the freezes happen late in the spring and early in the fall.
- The containers can be moved into the sun as needed, and be right where you want your garden plants.
- Do you have rocky or clay soil on your property? With container gardening, you control the soil. No rototilling needed each year.
- No weeding. Ever. If nothing else impresses you, this fact will!

### Containers

- Almost any container will do, as long as it has drainage holes. Add drainage holes in the bottom of buckets, bins, or other containers with a drill. In a 2-gallon pot, drill 4-6 holes that are at least ¼ inch in diameter.
- Empty buckets can often be found for \$1-\$2 (or free!) at bakeries, delis and restaurants. You can also purchase buckets in hardware stores. Check garage sales for inexpensive pots or buckets.
- Bins, used tree pots from nurseries, half-barrels...the possibilities for inexpensive containers are endless.
- For larger plants such as full-sized tomatoes, choose 4 gallon or larger buckets.

### The soil

- Choose a good quality POTTING soil.
- **Do not** use manure, compost, or garden soil- they compact too much for a bucket garden
- Plants in the nightshade family (such as Tomatoes, tomatillos, peppers and eggplant) must have fresh soil each year. The soil that was used for tomatoes can be replenished and used for other crops.
- At the end of the year, dump the soil out on a flat surface and add 1/3 compost or fresh potting soil. Adding coir or perlite will keep it from becoming compact. Mix well, add water, and allow to sit overwinter before reusing.

- Optional: Fertilize once a month with an organic fertilizer if the potting mix does not have fertilizer added. Fertilize monthly when reusing soil. Adding compost to the mix will help the plants find the nutrients they need, but fertilizing will definitely make a difference in the growth of your plants.

### The place to grow

- Different plants need different conditions. Nightshades need sunlight. Most leafy greens can do well in part sun.
- Place a bucket lid under the pot if you have the pot on cement.
- Do not place the pot on grass unless you will move it daily. Placing things on grass will kill the grass.

### Watering

- In hot weather the containers will need to be watered more often- at least once a day.
- On hot, windy summer days, check the water twice a day.
- Try not to get the foliage wet while you water- this can cause sunburn in some plants.
- Water enough for the water to begin coming out the bottom, but not so it is pouring out- you do not want to wash away the nutrients!
- Set up a self-watering system to make watering easier. Go on You Tube and search for 'Self watering bucket garden'. Watch several videos to find the easiest method for your needs.

### What to grow in buckets

- Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, tomatillos (one plant per pot)
- Beets, carrots, radish (space according to directions on seed packet)
- Green beans, bush peas,
- Summer squash, zucchini, cucumbers (one plant per bucket)
- Lettuce, kale, spinach, chard (don't overcrowd)
- Mint (a perennial), herbs (generally one plant per pot unless it is a big pot)
- Sweet potatoes (one per pot). The leaves are edible as well as the tubers!
- Edible flowers: nasturtiums, pansies, Johnny jump-ups can be added to your buckets.