



9 Common Container Gardening Mistakes

Container Gardening can be very simple, but there are some common mistakes that have been made by many a gardener. We've listed them here so hopefully you'll learn from our mistakes rather than having to make your own!

- 1. Don't fill your container prior to placing it.** Once filled with soil, your container can be extremely heavy, so put it where you want it to end up first to save the lifting. When planting in very tall containers, fill the bottom with plastic bottles, rocks or gravel, or pottery shards to save having to fill the entire container with potting soil.
- 2. Don't over or underwater.** Check for adequate drainage holes before filling your container. Also check the watering requirements when choosing your plants, to make sure they all have similar needs and that you follow those requirements. Most container gardens will need watered at least once per day throughout the summer. Many smaller containers (and hanging baskets) will need watered even more often as they dry out very quickly. When you water, water deeply enough to soak the root ball – a good rule of them is to water until you see water running out the bottom of the pot.
If your plant does dry out, give it a really good soak right away and it may pull through. If your container is small enough, submerge the entire thing in a bucket of water until all the bubbles subside. For larger containers, poke holes deep into the soil down to the roots and water generously.
- 3. Don't forget the Rule of Proportion.** Consider the height, breadth, and quantity of plants you're choosing in relation to the size of the container you'll be using. A large container stuffed with short plants can look awkward and stunted. A good rule of thumb is to have at least one plant that will grow as tall as the container. Also include trailing plants along the side to really polish off your garden.
- 4. Don't buy weak or sick plants. Shop Warner's instead!**
You may be tempted to purchase your plants at a big box store to save money. But remember the old adage "you get what you pay for". Big box stores have nothing to lose if the plants they carry don't sell or die prior to being sold because they don't pay their grower until the plant sells. What that means for you is that those plants

aren't given the love and attention that ours are, and therefore are less likely to thrive. Another very important consideration, especially for annuals, is that growers saturate their plants being sold to box stores with a growth inhibitor, to help keep them looking good longer while they're sitting on the floor of the big box store, not getting watered. Unfortunately, that growth inhibitor also keeps them from flourishing when you plant it in your container.

5. **Don't forget your plants have needs too.** Double check the growing requirements for the plants you're placing in a container together to make sure they all have similar light, water, soil, and feeding requirements.
6. **Don't be afraid to Prune.** Don't be afraid to prune back your plants when they start to look leggy or when the blooms die back. This will help ensure they keep growing and blooming, and they'll look better maintained this way.
7. **Don't be afraid to Fertilize.** Container gardens use up nutrients much faster than plants in the ground, due to runoff and many other factors. We have a number of organic options to choose from, and we recommend that you fertilize with every other watering.
8. **Don't have unrealistic expectations.** When planning your container garden, take into consideration your lifestyle and habits. If you travel a lot in the summer, get self watering containers – or call in a favor from a friend to stop by daily to water your container garden. And remember, if your plant looks sickly, leggy, or you just don't like it; don't be afraid to replace it.
9. **Don't leave your containers outside over the winter months.** Our Northern Arizona climate is just too harsh for most pottery; especially ceramic or terra cotta; to withstand the extreme cold and moisture fluctuations over the winter. After the first year, your container may crack or fall apart if left outside.