

Full Sun Container Gardening

Container gardens are an ideal solution for gardeners whose space is limited or whose soil, water or light is inadequate. The duration and intensity of sunlight is important when selecting containers, soil and plants for full sun.

Use clean containers that have adequate drainage and are large enough for the plants to be grown. Containers include pots, windows boxes and hanging baskets or any other container which has good drainage and is roomy enough for the plant and plant roots. Clay and stone containers are heavy and the soil inside them dries very quickly. Soil in plastic containers is slower to dry. All containers need several drain holes. Never use garden soil, which may contain diseases and insects; it is also heavy and does not drain well. Pre-moisten a good soilless potting mix before adding to the container. A time release fertilizer can be incorporated into the mix at the time of planting. Soilless mixes are lightweight and tend to drain quickly.

Container plants in full sun will need more frequent watering, often once or twice daily. A soil moisture meter is useful to determine when to water. Water soluble fertilizer may be needed as nutrients dissipate with the additional watering. Deadhead and prune plants to maintain continual flowering. Weeds are rarely a problem but in full sun, aphids and other insects may appear.

Annuals are a good choice for sunny containers. Popular full sun flowers include African daisy or osteospermum, verbena, petunia, shorter marigolds, and zinnia. Canna is a good choice for containers at least 15 inches in diameter, especially when combined with a colorful coleus. A mix of colorful foliage is an attractive addition to containers.

Some fruits can also be container grown. Tiny alpine strawberries thrive in hanging baskets. Vegetables and herbs also grow well if suited to the size of the container. When growing vegetables, plant those labeled as a dwarf variety. There are tomato, eggplant and pepper varieties that are specific to container gardening. Rutgers Fact Sheet FS055 "Container Gardening with Vegetables" contains additional suggestions. Most herbs also are easy to grow in full sun and can be relocated inside to a southern or western facing window in colder weather.

Checklist for March

Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Begin your spring garden clean-up.
- ✓ Plant peas when the ground has thawed and is not soggy; [Rutgers Fact Sheet #FS129](#)
- ✓ Set out other cold-hardy vegetables such as spinach, chard, cabbage and cauliflower later in the month.

Trees and Shrubs

- ✓ Prune shrubs and evergreens including boxwood and Japanese holly before new growth begins. [University of Maryland Pruning Shrubs Fact Sheet](#)
- ✓ Remove diseased, dead, weak or crossing branches from summer flowering shrubs. Shape the plants. [Rutgers Fact Sheet #FS1221](#) "Pruning Flowering Shrubs."
- ✓ Prune roses this month. Remove winter-killed canes. Pruning results in long-stemmed flowers and compact bushes.
- ✓ Unwrap fig trees toward the end of the month. [Rutgers Fact Sheet #FS1198](#)

Lawn

- ✓ Fertilize your lawn after March 1 (NJ Fertilizer Law, A2290). Repair damaged areas of the lawn. [Rutgers Fact Sheet #FS584](#)



