INTRODUCTION
Container planting involves the use of an assortment of items in the home to grow vegetables or ornamental plants. Items which would otherwise be discarded as garbage can be used in your home garden.

Since plants are confined to a small, isolated volume of rooting media, water and nutrient reserves can be quickly exhausted. Therefore, you must maintain soil fertility levels, for container planting to be productive.

TYPES OF CONTAINERS
You can use almost any receptacle — wooden crates, boxes, troughs, bottles, drums/barrels, flower pots, milk tins, broken crockery (teapots, etc.) old baskets, old shoes/boots, paint cans, biscuit tins, PVC piping.

CHOICE OF CONTAINERS
Make use of containers that are easy to handle, easy to clean, durable, non-corrosive and non-toxic, or which contained edible material.

Porous containers such as clay pots, are cooler and more suitable than non-porous containers such as plastics.

Black plastic bags which are exposed to strong sunlight can overheat and cause root damage. If black bags/black plastic containers are used, keep the soil moist to avoid root injury.

CONTAINER PLANTING

HARVESTING
Harvest vegetables during the cool times of the day. Avoid harvesting, during extremely hot conditions.

VEGETABLES GROWING IN A VARIETY OF CONTAINERS

Wash vegetables before storing to remove dirt and pests. For celery, harvest mature leaves as required.
Wet.

Time. Wooden troughs become very heavy when wet.

Fertilizers tend to corrode metal containers over time. Wooden troughs become very heavy when wet.

**Choice of crop:**

When deciding what crops to grow consider:

- Personal like and dislikes
- The height of the mature plant
- The growth habit of the crop (bushy or tall and erect)
- The type of rooting system
- The duration of the crop

**Preparation of Containers**

Container preparation will vary depending on your choice.

Do the following:

- Perforate the sides, as well as the bottom of tall containers.
- Ensure that cut edges of tins or cans are smoothed over to prevent accidental injury.

**Preparation of the soil medium**

Soils for container planting should:

- be friable (crumbles easily in the hand),
- have good aeration and drainage
- have a high organic matter content
- be as free as possible of pest and disease organisms.

In container planting, small amounts of soil must provide large amounts of nutrients.

A good mixture consists of two parts soil; one part sand, and one part well-rotted manure.

Enhance soil fertility and texture by adding compost. Commercial fertilizers containing trace elements can be substituted for compost. For every 30 litres (7 gal) of soil, add 125 g (1/2 cup) of 12:24:12, when preparing the soil medium. Powdered or crushed charcoal is a good additive. It improves drainage and holds nutrients for plants to use.

Improve acidic (sour) soil by adding wood ash, crushed eggs shells or crushed limestone.

Use large containers to store fresh soil, soil which is to be recycled, finished compost, sand and other additives.

Soil can be removed from containers and recycled.

**SITE SELECTION**

(Site factsheet on Places to Plant at Home). When choosing a site for container planting, you must consider the light, wind, convenience of management and aesthetics.

Light: Light is the most important consideration. Remember, vegetables need at least six hours of continuous sunlight to do well.

Areas that receive direct sunlight for a few hours are only suitable for very succulent vegetables such as tomato and patchou. Even so, these crops will grow slowly.

Plants which receive direct sunlight, as well as heat radiating from large walls, can overheat. Minimize injury by ensuring that enough water is available in the soil at all times.

Leaffy vegetables tolerate shade better than roots and tubers. Fruits, legumes and some vegetables do not tolerate shade well.

Wind: Guard against mechanical damage from strong winds, especially for rooftop gardens. Where windbreaks are used, they should be about three times (3x) the height of the plants.

Place containers where they are not likely to fall on humans or animals.

**Convenience of Management**

Locate containers in convenient areas where plants can be watered, tended and harvested easily and safely.

Aesthetics: Place attractive plants in prominent areas. Do not place plants where they can damage buildings by water seepage.

**Establishment and care of plants**

Large seeds such as beans, cucumber and ochro, and seeds of root vegetables (e.g. Carrots, beets and radish) can be planted directly into the container.

Transplant other vegetable crops small seeded plants at the seedling stage e.g. Tomato and lettuce.

Some plants can be obtained from plant parts e.g. sweet potato from cuttings, chive from off-shoots. Protect cuttings and off-shoots from strong sun and heat for 2-3 weeks after planting.

**Do not tolerate weeds in containers!!**

Very small containers can be used for herbs, lettuce and patchoi. They are not very productive and require much less attention than large containers.

If the root is the edible part of the plant e.g. sweet potato, use a container that will not limit root development.

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**Correct watering is learnt only by observation and experience. Too much water reduces root aeration and encourages disease. Too little water leads to wilting and stunted growth and eventually in death of the plant.**

It is not necessary to water plants every day. Check plants once or twice per day to see if they need watering. On cool days plants need little water. Similarly, small plants or plants growing in shady areas require less water.

**Pest and Disease Control:** Control can be done using a variety of methods:

- By removal of pest by hand
- By removal of diseased plants and pruning of parts
- With homemade remedies e.g. garlic and neem
- With safe chemicals
- By incorporating insect repellent plants e.g. marigold and chive in the container.

Infertile soil and paved areas can become productive by planting in containers.