



GROWING A CONTAINER GARDEN

Flowers are key, of course, so you want to select those that bloom for a long time and are adapted to the rising temperatures summer brings. Colorful foliage or leaves that add texture are also important attributes. Plants in the same containers should have the same cultural requirements, such as whether they prefer full sun or shade and moisture preferences.

Containers potted up for late spring and early summer could last throughout the summer and into fall, depending upon your selection of plants.

Spider plants, salvia, angelonia, geraniums and petunias will get you started in the flower category. Coleus, creepers and cannas are winners for their foliage. Tropicals, such as bird of paradise and ginger, add colorful drama with flowers and foliage through summer and fall.

Containers usually need a variety of plants that fit these three elements: thrillers (dramatic), spillers (cascading) and fillers (just what it sounds like).

Thrillers: Salvias are workhorses in containers, serving as thrillers or fillers. Tall ones work well as centerpiece plants, adding height or spikiness to a mix. Spider flower, angelonia and bird of paradise can also fill the thriller role.

Spillers: Sweet potato vines, creeping thyme and petunias are good spillers. As they cascade, they soften the edges of containers or they scamper through the mix to add a carpet of color for companion plants.

Fillers: Geraniums, snapdragons, periwinkle and ornamental peppers are good filler plants.

Here are some other tips for colorful containers:

- Monitor the soil moisture. Pots in hot sun may need more water than those in shade.
- Apply a liquid fertilizer according to label directions. You can use an all-purpose product or one specially formulated to boost blooms.
- Keep plants tidy by removing spent flowers or disease or insect-damaged leaves.
- If a plant starts to look bad, pull it out and replace it with a new selection.

