



# WINDOW BOXES MADE EASY

Window boxes need no introduction. Picture the classic eye-catcher: a narrow box painted perfectly to match the house trim, abundantly spilling forth ivy geraniums, pansies, and petunias. You can come across plenty of these old-fashioned favorites embellishing gingerbread houses or jazzing up everything from a Fishtown Row home to a city highrise condo.

Window boxes, of course, are just containers attached to the house. They're easy to plant. Here are some key points to keep in mind to help you choose, plant, and care for a window box:

- Select a style that matches your house. Treated softwood or hardwood boxes are easy to paint or stain to blend in beautifully with their surroundings. Plastic, metal, terra-cotta, or concrete boxes can work too, but are harder work with.
- Pay attention to size. A window box looks best if its length is within a couple of inches of the size of the window, although slight differences — long or short — won't hurt. Plants need room to grow and soil that doesn't dry out too fast.
- Make your own box if your window is oddly sized. Use 1-inch boards and simple joinery with waterproof glue and galvanized or brass screws, that won't rust, to secure the pieces. Drill several drain holes along the bottom.
- Go for a sunny exposure to please the most plants. This, though, increases your watering chores. Remember that some window boxes are protected from rains, so you need to check regularly for dryness. Don't worry if there's shade. Many excellent shade plants thrive in partial or full shade.

Position the box below the window by a few inches. If you happen to have a window that opens outward, you have to lower the box. Use steel brackets every 18 inches or so and fasten them into the siding or masonry with the proper screws. Rest the box on the supports and screw the bottom to the brackets. Always mount the box before you plant.

## Planting and caring for your window box:

**You have three options for planting your window box**

- Plant directly in the container.
- Drop in potted plants and fill around them with moss, bark, or another lightweight material.
- Put plants in a plastic or metal liner that fits inside the box. With this method, you can rotate liners and add fresh plants when current plantings pass their prime.

Basically, you plant the same way you do in any container. Cover the drain holes, fill with soil mixture, and firm soil around plants, leaving at least 1 inch at the top for watering. Use routine good care on the window box, starting with regular watering, feeding with a liquid fertilizer, and grooming to remove faded flowers and leaves.



## Picking the Right Plant:

Choosing a container and a location is a fine start for window box gardening, but picking the right plants really makes the difference in your growing success.

Generally, select a mixture of

- SPILLERS cascading or trailing plants
- THRILLERS compact plants that grow tall enough to be seen without blocking the window
- FILLERS plants that fill in and accent your other plant choices.

For a dramatic display, choose plants that contrast with the background — bright plants against light siding or wood, pale flowers against dark brick walls.

Maintain the plants. Window boxes require frequent watering, often daily in hot, dry weather. Soak the soil completely at each watering. Use a water-soluble flowering plant fertilizer dissolved at one-quarter strength once a week or according to package instructions. Trim dead flowers and straggly growth and replace plants that perish or look ratty. Remove some plants if the box becomes too crowded or requires watering too frequently. Annuals are best suited for window displays but Perennials can be added if your boxes are an adequate size.

## It's Time to Plant:

- Add "Soil Moist" to your favorite soil mixture while the soil is dry to help maintain moisture and make your life easier throughout the growing season.
- Fill the box with your soil mixture and wet the soil thoroughly.
- Add your seeds or plants—remember to do extra checks for dryness through the hot season, as elevated window planters tend to dry out faster than other planters. Fertilize regularly throughout the growing season and dead-head (remove dead flowers) to keep the window boxes looking their best.
- Experiment with different types of plants including flowers, herbs and even vegetables. There's nothing nicer than a wonderful waft of herb or floral fragrance when you open your window.
- Plant for display throughout the season. You can even create a window box which will provide color and texture through the winter with winter foliage or winter-flowering plants for your region.