



# The Real Dirt

June, 2011

## Container Gardening: Going to Pot

You can defy time and space with container gardening. You can move plants around and experiment with putting the right plant in the right place at the right time.

Mix up your container collection with a variety of shapes and sizes. Inventive gardeners use broken pots, pails, tubs and baskets.

For large containers where only a shallow depth of soil is required for proper growth, fill the unused space with Styrofoam chunks covered with filter cloth. For deep containers, particularly strawberry pots, install perforated plastic watering pipes. For hanging baskets you can retain moisture by using water retaining diapers, drip pans and reservoirs.

Make sure that your container has one or two large holes for drainage and that the drainage hole is not obstructed by covering it with screening or filter cloth.

Fill the container half to three quarters full of potting mix. Use a good potting mix that includes a blend of ingredients such as peat, vermiculite, perlite and sand. Add

some slow release fertilizer or some water retaining crystals if desired. Arrange the plants in the container with the largest plant or thriller either centered or asymmetrical. Then add the colourful or foliage thriller plants and alternate with spillers. Before backfilling with potting mix, soak the root ball in water and root stimulator. Leave about two inches between the top of the soil and the lip of the container for water and mulch.

For spring planting, crocus, hyacinth, daffodils and tulips are reliable and colourful. They can be planted in the fall and wintered in ground outside or they can be purchased from a commercial greenhouse in the spring. Pansies, violas and primulas planted in shallow containers make a great show.

Don't forget to plant herbs in containers. Mint, parsley and sage do well,

For summer planting, the list is endless. Be sure to select your plants appropriately for sun or partial shade. In the fall, chrysanthemums, asters, and old reliable kale will all do well, while many of the many of the summer plants including marigolds, alyssum, dust miller and gaillardia will continue to bloom until a hard frost.

Winter is the time to use frost proof containers for displaying evergreens including varieties of juniper, cedar, spruce mugo pine and Siberian cypress. As an alternative to live plants, you can create beautiful arrangements

with bows, cones and berries. Do not use real ceramic or cement containers as they will crack. There are great look-a-like cement containers such as the one in this picture that you would swear were cement but avoid this problem.



Container plants need more attention than in-ground plants. They dry out rapidly and should be checked regularly with a moisture meter. Off the ground containers should be watered every second day in hot weather, while hanging baskets or containers in sunny locations should be watered everyday.

It is beneficial to investigate drip irrigation home made self watering systems or those using a reservoir or a wick.

Expand your horticultural horizon an instantly smarten up an area with the huge range of possibilities available with container gardening.

*Tom McCavour,  
Master Gardener*

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### The Real Dirt!

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## Master Gardeners of Simcoe County

### JUNE TO DO List

- Stake plants before they fill in (Peonies, Hydrangea)
- Apply mulch to shrub plants before they fill in
- Pinch back Artemesia, Bee Balm, Black-eyed Susans, Catmint Purple Coneflower and Shasta Daisies to encourage bushier growth
- Prune early flowering shrubs (eg. Lilac) that have finished flowering to encourage new growth for next year
- Water transplants regularly until they become established
- Weed as they appear to avoid spending more time later

### Garden Humour:

The real meaning of Plant Catalog terminology:

“Grows more beautiful each year” means “Looks like roadkill for the foreseeable future”.

### Where to find us for free gardening advice!

#### ONGOING:

**E-mail Help Line:** mgoc\_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily
- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

#### SPEAKING EVENTS

**July 6th, 2011, Alternatives to Pesticides: 10.30 am**

**Speaker Carol Dunk,**

Stroud Library, 7883 Yonge Street, Innisfil

#### COMING EVENTS

**July 19th, 2011 Master Gardener Meeting 4.00pm**

234 Phillip Street, Stayner

**June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Health and Information Fair for Mature Adults 9.30 am to 3.00pm**

The Wasaga Countrylife Cottage and RV Resort

85 Theme Park Road, Wasaga Beach

**TBA** Fix up session for The Bob Rumball Centre.

#### UPCOMING ISSUES

Drought Tolerant Gardening

Alternatives to Killing Weeds

**Ask a Master Gardener** books containing answers to your most common gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for only \$10 or Gardening Guides for only \$1. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend! Either e-mail [jonbon@bell.net](mailto:jonbon@bell.net) to order or call 705-436-5292



For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Joan Nieman-Agapas 705-721-9088. For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website: and follow the links to

Simcoe County Master Gardeners.