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PLANTS IN CONTAINERS ADD BEAUTY
TO THE MODERN HOME
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Plants in containers are used in numerous ways to improve the landscaping of modern homes. The traditional window box may still be found in some situations, but other uses are becoming much more common. As examples, planters and containers of many types may be located on and around porches, decks, terraces, swimming pools, and other outdoor living areas.

Planters and Containers

Planters located along the edge of a porch or terrace should be of strong masonry construction. Window boxes, or the square or tub type containers for the patio, may be of wood or crockery material. All planters or containers must have holes in the bottom to allow adequate drainage.

Containers should be at least eight inches deep. Select as large a size as can be used appropriately in the space available. All wooden containers should be treated with a copper naphthenate preservative to retard decay. Do not use creosote or pentachlorophenol compounds which may seriously damage plants.

Planting and Culture

Plants for containers should be sturdy, well rooted, vigorously growing young seedling plants, or rooted cuttings. Seeds planted directly in the container start growing too slowly to be satisfactory.

A high humus, soil mixture for containers may be prepared from 1 part loam, 1 part sand, 1 part shredded peat moss, and 1/2 part dried manure. Add 1 cup of 5-10-5 fertilizer per bushel and mix thoroughly.

Before filling the container, cover the holes with concave pieces of broken crockery, or pegged plastic covers which may be secured from a local garden center or greenhouse. This will prevent the soil from covering and closing the holes. Then add two inches of crushed stone or coarse gravel to ensure good drainage.

Fill containers 1/2 to 3/4 full of soil mixture, depending on the size of the root ball of the plants being used. Set the plants firmly, and fill around the roots to within 1 inch of the top of the container. This space is necessary to allow easy watering.

The plants should be slightly deeper in the soil than they previously grew. Apply a half inch mulch of fresh sawdust, sphagnum peat moss, or fresh shredded bark or wood chips to conserve moisture and help keep the soil cool.

Plants in containers will need to be watered each day, or at least 2 or 3 times each week. The dried manure and fertilizer in the soil mixture should provide adequate nutrients for the plants for several months. Weeds must be removed as they appear.

As annual flowering plants start to grow, the main stem and side branches may be pinched back to produce a compact, bushy shape. Flowers should be removed when they start to fade to promote continuous blooming. Evergreen shrubs and dwarf trees must be pruned regularly to secure and retain the desired form and size.

Plants for Containers

Many types of annual flowers, foliage plants, and dwarf shrubs and trees may be used in planters, window boxes and containers. The most important requirement is to select plants which will attain the desired size and form. Seed and nursery catalogs list many plants from which you may choose those which fill your particular needs. Annual flowers are among the easiest and most colorful plants for growing in containers.

Planters or window boxes which are to be viewed from one side should have taller plants at the back, with lower plants in front and at the ends. Trailing plants such as ivy and verbena may be planted along the edge to hang over the sides. Develop a pleasing combination, and, to avoid a crowded or cluttered appearance, do not use too many different kinds of plants.

If your location faces north, or has considerable shade, select foliage plants, or flowering plants which typically grow in subdued light. Some of the best are wax or tuberous begonia, coleus, impatiens, fuchsia, viola, pansy, and vinca.

Cacti and succulents may be selected for a hot, sunny location. Plant these in a mixture containing equal parts of sand and your basic soil mixture.

Dwarf citrus trees, small shrubs, or large foliage plants are suggested for tubs or large crocks on the terrace, deck, or ledge around a swimming pool. Tender species may be moved into an enclosed porch or home greenhouse for the winter.

Containers or planters which are to remain outdoors during the winter may be planted with hardy dwarf shrubs. Adequate soil moisture levels must be maintained to avoid desiccation and browning of the foliage. Evergreen branches may be stuck in the soil of window boxes and planters to present an attractive appearance in winter.

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