

Bulletin #2762, Growing Vegetables in Container Gardens

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Adapted for Maine by Associate Extension

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Are you short on space? Many kinds of vegetables can be easily grown in containers. Just follow these basic guidelines:

- Select containers. You can use buckets, empty milk jugs, dishpans, or window boxes. Each container should be clean and have at least one drainage hole in the bottom. Use a potting mix or mix your own with garden soil, compost, peat, and vermiculite.
- If you are starting plants from seed, check seed packets for planting and space recommendations. Not all of the seeds will germinate, so plant more seed than you need and thin later.
- If you are using transplants, fill each container until it is about half to three-quarters full. Then set your plants on the mix. Keep all plants at least one inch away from the side edge of the container so they don't get too hot. Add potting mix around plants to within an inch of the top of the container and press lightly. Put your container where it will get at least 6 hours of sun each day.
- Water thoroughly. Plants in containers dry out more quickly than plants that are in the ground: you may have to water them daily.
- To keep plants growing and flowering, water with a balanced (20-20-20), water-soluble fertilizer, mixed as directed, every other week in summer. Pull any weeds out of your container.

- Pick your vegetables when they are ripe so the plant will continue to set more fruit. Then wash them and make something good to eat!

[VIDEO: Gardening in Limited Space Using Container Gardens, Part 1 \(YouTube\)](#)

[VIDEO: Gardening in Limited Space Using Container Gardens, Part 2 \(YouTube\)](#)

What to Grow

Vegetable	Type of	Recommended Varieties
Beans, string	5-gallon window box	Provider, Jade, E-Z Pick
Beets	5-gallon window box	Early Wonder Tall Top, Red Ace
Broccoli	5-gallon pot (1 plant); 15-gallon tub (3 plants)	Arcadia, Packman
Brussels sprouts	5-gallon pot (1 plant); 15-gallon tub (2 plants)	Jade Cross, Oliver
Cabbage	5-gallon pot (1 plant); 15-gallon tub (3 plants)	Gonzales, Arrowhead
Chard	5-gallon window box	Bright Lights, Ruby Red
Chinese cabbage	5-gallon pot (1 plant); 15-gallon tub (3 plants)	Minuet
Carrots	5-gallon window box at least 12 inches deep	Thumbelina, Minicor, Parmex
Cucumber	2-gallon bucket (1 plant)	Bush Champion, Littleleaf
Eggplant	5-gallon bucket (1 plant)	Fairy Tale No. 226
Lettuce	5-gallon window box	Tom Thumb, Red Sails, Salad Bowl, Baby Oakleaf, any mini head variety
Onions	5-gallon window box	Purplette, Gold Coin, Pearl Drop
Peas	5-gallon window bucket	Caselode, Sugar Ann, Nova (leafless)
Sweet pepper	2-gallon pot (1 plant); 15-gallon tub (5 plants)	King of the North, Ace
Radishes	5-gallon window box	Easter Egg, most other types
Spinach	5-gallon window box	Tyee, Space

Vegetable	Type of	Recommended Varieties
Squash, winter	5-gallon bucket	Burpee's Butterbush, Bush Buttercup
Tomatoes	5-gallon bucket	Patio, Roma, Sprite, Husky Red, Husky Gold, Husky Pink
Zucchini	5-gallon bucket or pot	Eight Ball, Raven, Geode

Here are some common container-grown vegetables, container sizes, and recommended varieties:

In addition, herbs such as parsley, chives, basil, and thyme are easy to grow in 5-gallon window boxes. Or, if you have a sunny window, grow them in smaller pots that you can move indoors for the winter.

Adapted with permission from Larry Bass, *Container Vegetable Gardening*, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, 1999.

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