



June Tip of the Month Let's Talk Container Gardening

One of the most exciting aspects of gardening is Container Gardening. At any age, you can have fun and the season long enjoyment of your work is endless right through the fall. Container gardening used to be known as planting a few window boxes and a pot or two of geraniums to place on your patio tables. Well, that has changed significantly during the past ten years. Now the experienced gardeners are coming in purchasing large volumes of Vermont-Grown hardy plants just for container gardens for their patio, window sill, walkway and even roof tops. Don't kid yourself, even if you live in a one room condominium in downtown Burlington, there is always room for containers on the patio, and your enjoyment can be as rewarding as spending a weekend in the garden bending over pulling weeds! It's exciting, really satisfying and can be more fun than any other aspect of gardening.

First let's consider the right containers. If you have a typical patio or deck that is lacking color, texture and intimacy you can change the look and feel in a simple choice of container selection. A different dimension or shape such as a tall cylinder pot in accenting a corner of your deck, or a squat glazed bowl planted with striking colors and textures will not only add dimension but flavor to your walkway or staircase. Containers with swirled lines, curves or even dramatic colors can be fun to work with and add color alone to a dull area even without great plants grown in Vermont. Many times gardeners will use foliage plants for height to accent a corner, and then plant multiple containers of color and texture (try using ornamental grasses, or multi colored foliage accent plants for starters), and you will be amazed with the results.

Match your containers, garden accents, and house or trim colors with your bloom colors; this is the fun and exciting challenge when planning container gardens. Remember, it is not what your neighbor thinks, it's what you feel works. Consider your desire for accent and accomplish your vision on your trip to the greenhouse when choosing your color palate. Anything goes these days for color, it's what you feel good about. So grab the container, drag it into the greenhouse and have fun. Filling the container with unplanted pots can be almost as much fun as the actual planting, because you have so many options to choose from (thanks to Proven Winner varieties). New varieties of Supertunias, Million Belles, Hybrid Coleus, or even some of the newest varieties available today of succulents work great in hot dry locations of your deck or patio. Try different color schemes, different textures and of course one of the favorites, tropical plants, such as Hibiscus, Dipladenia, or Mandevilla, which mix wonderfully with annuals varieties, and love the hot sun of a patio or entryway. You can always plant your veggie and herbs in containers too, which is a fun and easy way to introduce children to gardening!

Container gardening is endless. There are so many containers to choose from in every style, size and shape. Just remember, if the container goes outside, don't forget you need some form of drainage,

either a fair deep layer of Perlite if there are no holes in the container, or take the time to drill holes. You won't be disappointed you did. The unpredictable weather in June can cause a lot of problems if containers get water logged and bacteria builds in the soil. Having proper drainage prevents over watering. You will know how much water is needed throughout the season when the water runs through the soil as it becomes saturated, and nuisance pests, such as gnats, will form in the excess water in the container. Many different avenues to learn, but guaranteed to be fun in the process. Remember, most containers need to be emptied in the fall to prevent freezing of soil and cracking of the container, which can be a costly mistake. Flipping the container upside down outside will help if you cannot empty the soil out, but may still cause a few problems in the end.

Happy gardening, a new way!! Container gardening ~ it's fun and rewarding all season long!!