

Massachusetts Master Gardener Association

FACT SHEET



Have Gardening Questions? The **Master Gardener Help Line Hours** are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays (all year) as well as Wednesdays (March-November) and Mondays (April-October).

Phone: 617-933-4929 Email: mghepline@masshort.org.

Planting Containers for Sunny Locations

Container gardening is becoming a very popular way to make a dramatic statement in your garden and to accent your home. All you need is a few plants, good soil, an appropriate container and a little time. Containers can be planted with annuals, herbs, perennials, houseplants, evergreens, vegetables and small shrubs. Their versatility offers an exciting approach to seasonal use as well. Using the proper plants, you can create year-round appeal.

Choose your container first. Bright-colored containers make a bold statement; use neutral colors if you want the container to blend with the environment. Add a good quality potting mix. Garden soil is too heavy for use in containers. If the pot is large, fill in the bottom with styrofoam peanuts or empty plastic bottles. This will make the container lighter and easier to move. Now get ready to plant.

If you are using your container for vegetables and/or herbs, you're all set to go. Just plant, fertilize, water and place the planter in a location where it will receive 6-8 hours of sun daily. Remember that life in a container is much different for a plant than one in the ground. Containers can offer excellent drainage, but the plants depend on you for water and nutrients. In the hot days of summer, water daily and fertilize as recommended.

For a flower-filled sun container will take little time to research and design. You can use annuals, perennials, houseplants, grasses, succulents, and small evergreens/shrubs. (Small evergreens, perennials and shrubs can last for several years in a container.) Use an odd number of plants (5 or 7) that can take the heat, and be sure to consider the color, height and sun requirement.

First, plant a tall, upright bold plant as an accent to balance the height of the planter. Next choose a medium height mounding plant to buffer the vertical and trailing plants. Use this plant as a "wow" factor with large or small, multiple blooms and/or colorful foliage. Finally, use a trailing plant to create a flow.

Houseplants (i.e., tropical or semi-tropical plants) are a great source for colorful foliage. Container gardening doesn't have to stop when the growing season is over. In the fall, the tender plants can be replaced with colorful fall plants. Beware that containers do not insulate a plant's roots from winter temperatures. Strong plants & seasonal cuttings will keep your containers going into spring.

Plants for Containers in the Sun

Vertical	Mounding	Trailing
Angelonia	Daisy, African	Ajuga
Canna	Daisy, Cobbity	Sweet potato vine
Flax, tropical	Geranium	Fern
Geranium	Iboza (Swedish ivy)	Lamium
Ornamental Grasses	Lantana (upright)	Lantana (trailing)
Mandevilla, staked	Marigold	Licorice Plant
Perennials	Mexican Heather	Lobelia
Persian Shield	Million Bell (upright)	Million Bell (trailing)
Salvia	Perennials	Petunia (cascading)
Spike	Petunia	Portulaca
Strawflower	Sage (herb)	Ivy
Sun coleus	Salvia	Sweet Potato Vine
Topiary plants	Strawflower	Verbena (trailing)
Tropical Daisy		Vinca (trailing)

The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to share knowledge and experience with the public through outreach programs in education, horticulture and gardening; to provide the Master Gardener Training Program to interested members of the public; and to provide graduates of the Master Gardener Training Program with educational and practical opportunities to extend their knowledge and interests in gardening and related topics. <http://www.massmastergardeners.org/>