Edible Spots & Pots: Growing Vegetables in Containers

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Why grow edibles in containers?

Convenience – closer to kitchen for rapid plant-to-table preparation
Movable to accommodate plant growth, privacy needs, entertaining
Extends the season in both hot and cold climates:
    You can start earlier in the season
    Hot climate considerations
    Cold climate considerations
    Easier to protect with poly film, Remay, even old blankets
Easy to overwinter tender plants
Easy to protect from pests
Seeds:
    Direct sowing vs. starting ahead
    Eliminate transplant shock
    Delicate seedlings readily monitored for germination, water needs, thinning
Weeds essentially a non-issue
Easily placed on drip irrigation
    Close to water source
    No worries about breaking lines while working
In a word, growing vegetables in containers offers the gardener far more control than conventional in-ground growing.

What can you grow in containers?

What *can't* you grow in containers?!
The relationship of root growth to top growth:
    The eccentricities of corn
    Perennial vegetables: asparagus, horseradish, rhubarb
    Tubers (potatoes) vs. swollen roots (radishes, carrots, beets)
Considerations in choosing vegetables and varieties:
- What you and your family like most
- What you can purchase locally at a good price & of high quality
- What is the most productive – limited real estate necessitates high productivity
- Continuous bearing vegetables
- Two-fers like beets
- Heirloom vs. hybrid varieties

Look for ways to extend the harvest period:
    Quick-maturing edibles and varieties
    Succession sowing
    Continuous sowing of fast crops – arugula, salad greens
Dwarf varieties
Parthenocarpic varieties
- Why and where it matters: cucumber, squash

How to grow vegetables in containers? Let's get to the nitty gritty:

The container:

What can you use?

- Window boxes
- Hanging baskets
- Adaptive reuse
- Specially created products
- Planting boxes and standard containers

Container considerations:

- **FOOD SAFE – if in doubt, do not use to grow food.**
- Beware of metals, industrial plastics, industrial wood (pallets)
- Volume/capacity: how big does your container need to be?
- Drainage holes – present or able to add
- Self-watering containers: benefits and drawbacks

The soil:

- The difference between natural soil and potting "soil"
- The problem of peat

Calculating how much soil to use:

- Volume of a cylinder: π x radius squared x height of container
- Volume of square or rectangle: length x width x height

The myth of "rocks for drainage"

Peat alternatives and other solutions

Can you reuse your potting soil from season to season?

Water:

- Evaporation concerns
- The case for drip irrigation
  - Water conservation
  - Disease reduction
  - Results of plants on drip

Fertilizer:

- Why fertilizer is crucial to growing vegetables in containers
- What type of fertilizer should be used?
- Time release fertilizers
- The myth of foliar feeding

Container gardening, organically

- What is organic gardening?

THANK YOU!

Best wishes for a delicious & productive season!