

# CONTAINER GARDENING



Whether it's a pot or a window-box, containers offer a great way to grow. There are some definite advantages to container growing too: you can control the soil mix and you can control the growing conditions if it's portable (you can start it off indoors and move it outside when the weather improves). There are all sorts of things that lend themselves to such use; the main things to consider are size, shape and what the container is made from.



## SHAPE

Make sure that everyone can reach the top of the containers, that the edges aren't sharp, and that they have good drainage.



## STABILITY

If your containers are somewhere exposed go for a shape and size that isn't easily blown over in the wind, something quite heavy and with a wide base perhaps.



## SIZE

Containers come in all shapes and sizes. If you're starting something off then you'll need some small containers, and if what you're growing needs hardening off, a slow and gradual preparation for being outside, then it should be reasonably lightweight and durable as you'll have to move it in and out to begin with. You'll also want something larger to transplant into.

Obviously, the bigger and heavier it is the less transportable it will be, so try and make sure that you've put it in the right place before you plant it up.



## TINY TIPS

- Don't use soil from your school grounds; it may contain weeds, pests or diseases which will cause havoc in a confined space. Get good quality potting compost (peat free) and plant away.
- You'll need to water containers up to three times more often than other kinds of garden, depending on the weather, as they can only catch the rainwater that falls directly into them.
- Whatever container you use make sure it's got a hole in its bottom for drainage.



## WELLINGTON BOOTS

Wellies can make great container gardens. Drill a few holes into the soles and around the edge (or cut the toes off and leave the sole intact – it's just about creating drainage), add a few pebbles to help and fill with soil. Plant up and place out somewhere so the plants can tumble out.



## CANS

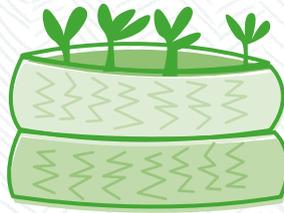
Soak off the labels and punch some holes in the bottom so they can drain properly. Different sizes of cans are useful as you might need to replant the smaller cans at some point. Small cans are handy to start plants off in.

## MATERIALS

It's worth giving some thought to the materials your containers are made of as each one has its pros and cons. For instance, plastics will help to retain moisture and can be reused if washed properly, but they can crack, and don't always weather very well; terracotta pots are pretty durable but don't bounce; while metal containers, like tin cans, can get very hot on a sunny day.

## STILL LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT CONTAINER?

Why not pop along to your local charity shop and see what treasures you can find.



## TYRES



Tyres have become quite popular. You can stack them up to make them more accessible and increase the depth of soil for your plants, but make sure you line the inside of the tyres properly if you're planning to grow food crops as used tyres will have picked up all sorts of grim stuff from being on the roads that could seep into your soil if there isn't a protective barrier.



## NEWSPAPER

Not as silly as it sounds; newspaper can be turned into pots that are great for starting off as they biodegrade in the ground.

You can buy kits that consist of a base and a pestle, it'll be a bit quicker and the pots might hold together a bit better, but essentially it'll be the same as an entirely homemade one so why not have a go at making your own?

### You will need:

- An old newspaper.
- Something tubular – a can or spice jar would do, the same width as the pot you want to create.
- Soil and compost (not peat).

### Instructions:

1. Cut a strip of newspaper the height of the pot you want to make, plus a bit extra to create the bottom.
2. Wrap the paper around the jar (or equivalent).
3. Tuck the excess paper into the open end. Remove the jar from the newspaper and use the base to squash the paper down inside (this will seal the bottom of your pot).
4. Fill with soil and plant your seeds.