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Check out OPL's Seed Lending & Gardening page to find more books, other resources, seed library locations, & upcoming events!



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THINKING OF CONTAINER GARDENING?

Good idea! Here are some of the reasons we love it...



Container gardening lets you grow food and experience nature even if you live in a small space or don't have a yard.



Growing your own veggies and herbs can save you money, be convenient, and help you feel more connected to your food.



Plants are pretty and can transform the way a space feels. They can make a small space feel calmer, more natural, more colorful, more beautiful! And, if your plants are in small enough containers, you can rearrange them to create different kinds of spaces as often as you'd like.



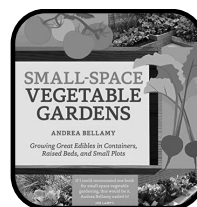
Tending to plants & watching them grow can be therapeutic and fun!



This zine is a very basic intro to help get you started with your container garden. If you want more info there are lots of books, websites, orgs, & gardening experts out there to help. Visit the library for help finding them!

EXPLORE FURTHER!

Now that you've gotten down the basics, you can explore further! The sources we used for this zine are listed below but there are so many more out there!



Small-Space Vegetable Gardens

By Andrea Bellamy

Beginner Gardening Step by Step: A Visual Guide to Yard and Garden Basics

Edited by Emma Tennant & Jane Simmonds



How to Plant a Container Garden in 6 Easy Steps

by Viveka Neveln



10 Steps to Container Gardening

Gulley Greenhouse & Garden Center



NEED SEEDS?

Visit one of the Oakland Public Library's Seed Libraries!

PESTS



Pests are common and natural. Don't fret! There are some steps you can take to avoid pests:

- Start with clean tools and pots
- Maintain healthy soil (water, fertilizer, make sure it isn't too compacted)
- Plant companion plants! Companion plants are those that work well with what you've planted to entice or repel different bugs.
- While some bugs eat your plants, other bugs help pollinate and ward off the bugs that are not welcome.
- There are lots of plants you can include in your garden that will attract these helper insects and pollinators.
- There are also plants called alliums (which include chives, garlic, onions, and leeks) that are great pest repellents because of their strong odors.



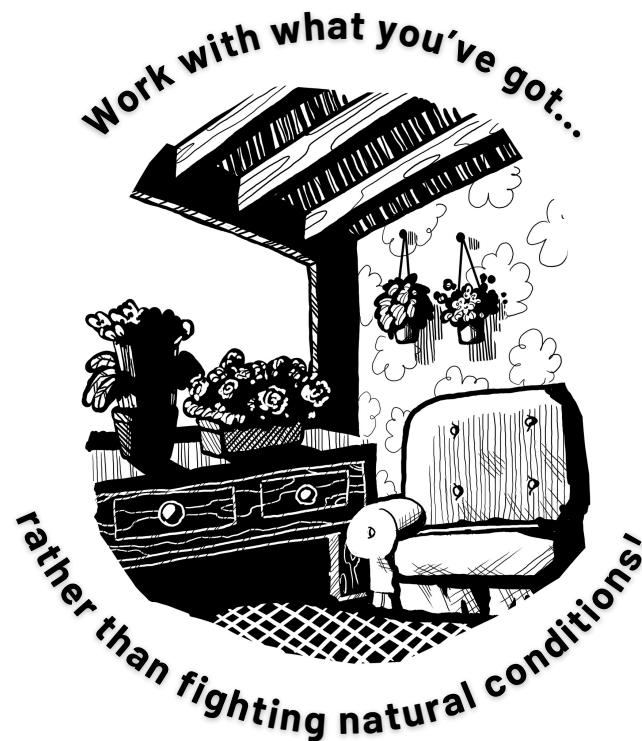
IF PESTS DO HAPPEN, YOU CAN TRY:

- Spraying leaves with strong jets of water to literally knock them off the leaves. Do this daily.
- Applying certain powders, sprays, and other organic products that are safe for humans and other mammals, but work to get rid of insects. Good options for this are insecticidal soap and NEEM oil.



ASSESSING YOUR SPACE

Before you start your garden, it's a good idea to look at the space you have and think about what will work well in it. Not every plant will work in every space, and a little bit of planning can help ensure your plants thrive.



FOR EXAMPLE

- Does your space get a lot of light?
- Is it shady?
- Is it windy?
- Does it bake in the sun?

Knowing these conditions will help you choose the right plants and make a plan for taking care of them properly.

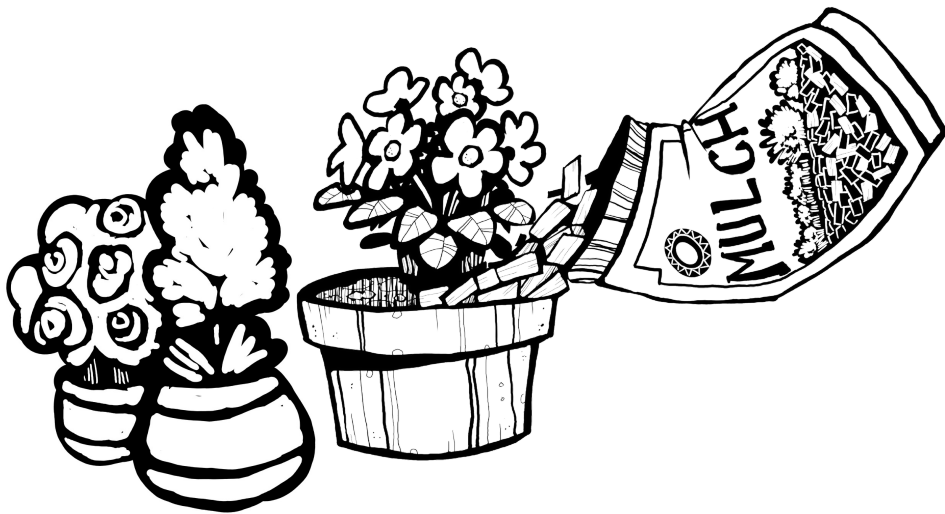
Most fruits and vegetables need at least six hours of direct sunlight a day to thrive, but some vegetables, like root vegetables and leafy greens, are happy with less.

The hotter and sunnier your space, the more often you will need to water.

WIND

Wind can be hard on delicate plants and can increase moisture loss. If your space is particularly windy:

- Think about mulching (putting a layer of wood chips or small rocks, etc. on top of the soil in each container). Mulching helps keep moisture in the soil.
- Create windbreaks. Blocking the wind from your tenderest plants will help keep them from getting too windblown.
- Group pots together to keep them from toppling.



If you can, place plants in areas that you spend time in and that are convenient to you – you will be more likely to remember to water and take care of them if you are around them all the time and they aren't inconvenient.

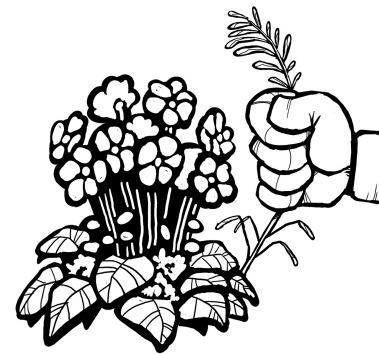
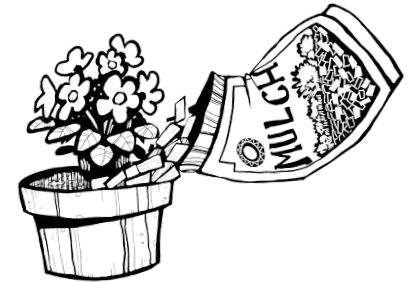
MAINTAINING

You've been working so hard on your container garden! You've done research, planted, watered, and watched as your new container garden grows and grows... You like what you are seeing and want it to continue, but how?

YOU CAN:

- **Mulch! Mulch! Mulch!**

Sometimes, heavy rain can lead to soil getting compacted together too tightly in outdoor container gardens. This can have a negative impact on your plant's root system. Mulching your surface soil can prevent this. Some people mulch using organic matter, like shredded tree bark, while others prefer to use small rocks. You can also buy mulch in bags from many local gardening centers & hardware stores.



- **Weed!** Pluck out unwanted volunteer plants as you see them.
- Tend to your garden by removing dead flowers and leaves to make room for new growth.
- Plants need nutrients, so remember to fertilize often!

As seasons and weather conditions change, you can move your containers (if they are light enough) to help them receive the best sunlight, shade, and wind conditions for the plants in your garden

WATERING

Three Basic Rules of Watering:

- Water the soil, not the leaves
- Water in the morning (or the evening), not midday
- Morning watering helps plants withstand heat during the day and gives time for the water to evaporate before cool nighttime temperatures, helping to avoid fungal diseases.
- Water deeply, not more frequently
- Better to soak deeply and infrequently, rather than lightly sprinkling the surface everyday



GETTING THE RIGHT SUPPLIES

Now that you've assessed your space, your next move is to decide what kinds of containers you will use. What best fits your living space and/or lifestyle? Is it a large terra cotta pot? A creatively re-used metal box? An unusually shaped Day-Glo plastic container?

You get to decide!



WHEN CHOOSING YOUR CONTAINERS

Make sure they allow for proper drainage. Without it, roots can become waterlogged and rot. Many containers you can purchase will already be set up for this. If you are going the DIY route with recycled containers, you may have to create drainage holes. One way to do this is to drill a hole in the bottom of the container. If it's a smaller plastic container (like a yogurt container), you can poke holes in the bottom with something sharp.

How much moisture will your container hold? Terra cotta planters are pretty and classic but lose moisture quickly so will need more water. Something like a recycled plastic container isn't as pretty but will hold moisture longer.

Recycled containers can be many things: an empty yogurt container, a bucket, a barrel, etc. The important thing to think about is how big your plant(s) will grow and choose containers that offer enough room. Different plants need different amounts of space. For example, tomatoes need deep pots to flourish, but many herbs do just fine in shallow pots.

Also, how durable do your containers need to be? If inside, you can get away with less durable. If outside in harsher conditions, you will want to choose a hardier container. Think about how heavy will they be once they are full of soil. Will they be easily moveable or more permanent?

If you are using recycled containers, it is a good idea to clean and sterilize them first. This helps avoid mold and disease. To sterilize you can clean them out and then soak them overnight in a solution of hydrogen peroxide or bleach and water. 1 part peroxide or bleach to 9 parts water is a good ratio. If you can't soak them, give them a good clean and a spray down.

WHEN TRANSPLANTING STARTS

- Fill your new container with soil.
- Dig a hole just a little deeper and twice as big as your start. Gently place your start into the middle of that hole so that its soil is level with the soil already in the pot.
- Loosely fill in the rest of the hole with soil. Do not pack the soil or bury the stem.
- Water thoroughly!



WHEN STARTING FROM SEEDS

Fill your container with soil and sow the seeds according to the seed packet, or just push the seed a little way into the soil and cover. Starting seeds inside, in smaller containers and warmer conditions, can help ensure your plants survive. However, lots of seeds will be fine if you start them outdoors in their permanent containers.

- Use light and airy soil—ask at your local nursery or garden center.
- Add plant food to the soil if you are using it.
- Give your seeds a good soak.
- Maintain consistent moisture. The soil should be constantly damp. A good way to do this is with a spray bottle.
- Most seeds want to be in a warmer climate – somewhere between 60-75 degrees F.
- Once seeds break through the soil, they need a LOT of light—14-16 hours a day.



OTHER SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED

A hand trowel or scoop for soil

A watering can or hose

An electric hand drill if you need to drill drainage holes/something sharp to poke a hole if the container is plastic

Potting soil or mix. Different mixes work well for different containers and plants—ask your local garden shop expert for advice on which to get!

***Bonus* Fertilizer (optional but a good idea)**

TOOLS YOU MAY WANT TO HAVE IN THE FUTURE

- Pruning sheers
- Stakes or twine to help contain/control growth

WHAT SEEDS WILL YOU PLANT?

It's your container garden, so...what would you like to grow? Veggies and herbs for cooking? Flowers to brighten your life? Pollinator plants to attract birds and bees? Or just something to help make your neighborhood a little greener? You will have many options and ultimately the decision is 100% yours! Here's some things to think about:

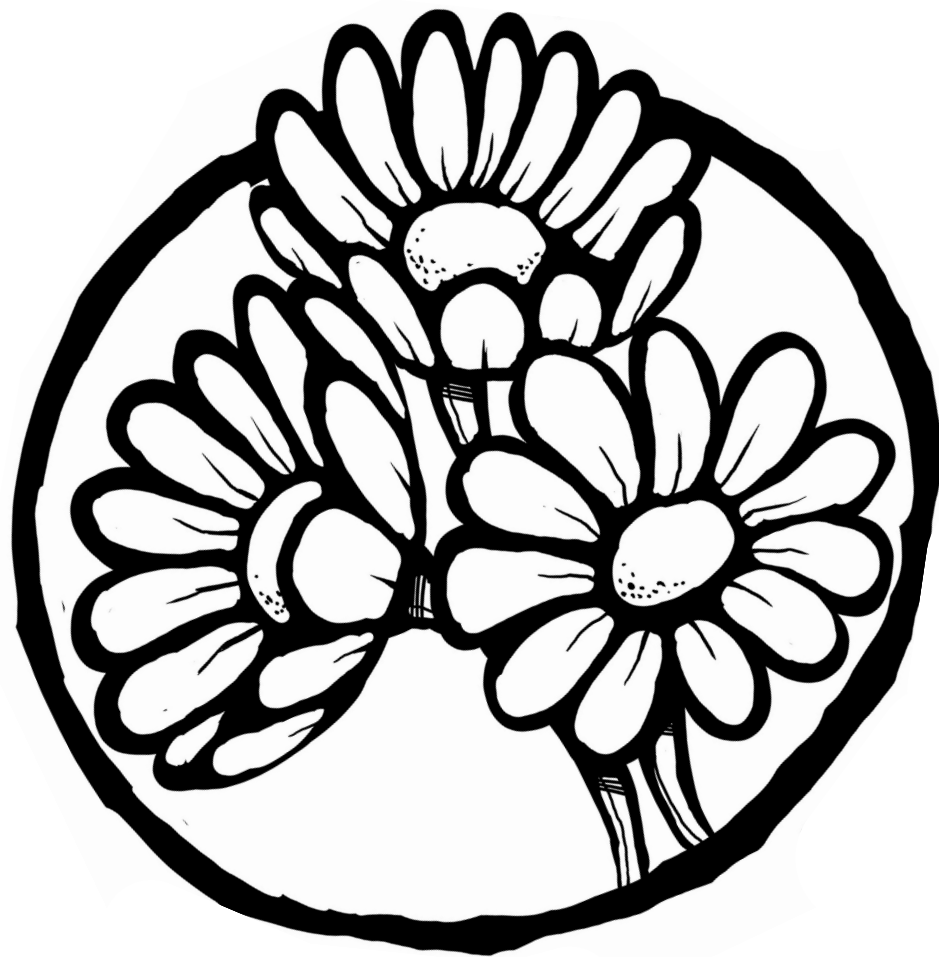
- How much sun & shade your plants are likely to receive from day to day in the space you have in mind. Try working with seeds that are likely to grow best under those lighting conditions.
- Remember that most fruits and veggies need a lot of direct sunlight every day. However, there are LOTS of plants that thrive in shadier conditions, including many hearty vegetables.

WHERE TO GET SEEDS

- Your local OPL Seed Library!
- Your local nursery or garden center
- Seed swaps (check out your local community garden)
- Online



If you plan to save your seeds at the end of your growing season, find seeds that are "open-pollinated" or "OP." Seed saving can be a lot of work but very rewarding! Check out OPL's Seed Saving brochure to find out more information.



SEEDS & STARTS

You're ready to start growing! Time to decide if you want to grow from seeds or starts. Starts are plants that are already growing. Either way is a great option. You can buy starts at your local nursery, ready to be transplanted to your containers of choice. You can also sow seeds inside and move them outside to larger containers later, or just start them right where you want them to grow.