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Container Gardening Basics

Using dish pans and other small containers to grow vegetables and herbs



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The essentials

To prepare dish pan container gardens, we recommend you use the following:

- ▶ Electric drill with a 3/8 inch bit
- ▶ Plastic 8-quart dish pans
- ▶ Seedlings or seeds of appropriate crops
- ▶ Potting mix or potting soil
- ▶ Mulch material
- ▶ Slow-release fertilizer
- ▶ Measuring cup
- ▶ Watering can
- ▶ Soluble fertilizer

Preparing the container

- ▶ Using an electric drill with a 3/8 inch bit, drill holes from the inside along the sides near the bottom of the container.
- ▶ By not drilling drainage holes directly through the bottom, a shallow reservoir of moisture can be maintained. This will help prevent the potting mix from drying out too quickly



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Potting mix or garden soil?



You may choose to use either potting soil or potting mix. Potting mix, having little or no soil, often contains plant products such as peat and coconut coir. Having a lighter texture, potting mix drains more readily and will be less compacted.

Moisten the mix and fill the containers



Premoisten the potting mix and then add to the containers until almost full.



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Add recommended amounts of slow-release fertilizer based on the product's directions



- ▶ As contain gardens might be used for months or longer for multiple crops, a dose of slow-release fertilizer is recommended to sustain long-term nutrient access.
- ▶ Both organic and mineral fertilizers are available in slow release form.



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Plant seedlings at appropriate distances and densities

- ▶ Seedlings should be planted at appropriate densities based on the type of crops.
- ▶ For example, loose leaf lettuce varieties are a good choice for small containers as the outer leaves may be harvested once or twice a week. Up to six plants can fit in an 8-quart container. Six cilantro plants will also fit.
- ▶ Only one seedling of larger plants, such as chili pepper, should be transplanted.
- ▶ Microgreens may be densely sowed directly into the containers.



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Add mulch after planting seedlings



- ▶ Mulch - either peanut hay, straw, dried moss or crumbled dry leaves - should be placed around the seedlings.
- ▶ Mulch helps to protect the potting mix from hard rain and reduce the splash effect, keeping the vegetables from getting too dirty.
- ▶ Mulch also helps to control weeds and maintain soil moisture under dry conditions



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Provide the seedlings with a starter dose of soluble fertilizer and follow up applications

- ▶ As slow-release fertilizer does not make nutrients available quickly, a starter dose of soluble fertilizer will help the seedlings get off to a good start.
- ▶ Soluble fertilizer may be mineral or organic. We use organic fish emulsion as both a starter fertilizer and for weekly applications.



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Happy gardening!



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