

5 Best Container Vegetables for Beginning Gardeners

Growing vegetables in containers is easy, especially for beginners! Here, you'll learn the 5 best container vegetables for beginning gardeners, planting instructions, and recipes for your harvest.



Are you a beginning gardener? New to ideas like crop rotation and plant thinning? Don't worry—vegetable gardening doesn't have to be a chore.

Even if you only have an apartment patio, you can grow your own vegetables in pots or containers. There's no comparison in flavor, and a \$3 packet of seeds will give you plants for several years.

Growing vegetables in containers is an easy way to enjoy fresh food without the hassles of pulling weeds or tilling the soil. All you need is a pot, good soil, and sun!

Here are the 5 best container vegetables for beginning gardeners. They're all easy to start from seed and will grow happily in pots on your patio, driveway, next to your pool...wherever they fit.



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Zucchini

Zucchini (also called summer squash) is a great vegetable for small-space gardeners.

It's nearly guaranteed to grow, it produces tons of veggies all summer long, and comes in lots of fun shapes and colors.

Varieties: Choose bush-type squash, which have a more compact footprint than the standard type.

Planting: Plant one plant per 15-gallon pot, or 2 plants in pots 20 inches or more across.

Recipes: We love making **Zucchini Fritters** or adding zucchini to stir-fry, spaghetti sauce, or fried rice.

BEST CONTAINER ZUCCHINI



Green Beans

I thought that all green beans had to grow up poles or on a trellis, because that's how Grandpa grew his green beans. I'm so glad that I was wrong!

Varieties: You can grow bush beans, wax beans, and snap beans in pots.

Planting: Plant beans 6-8 inches apart and harvest daily, while the pods are slender and crisp.

Recipes: Green beans are delicious when added to a stir-fry or **Honey-Garlic Chicken**. It's also easy to **freeze green beans** if you have an abundant harvest.



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"Bush Slicer" Cucumber

Most cucumbers are vining plants, and will grow best when they have a trellis or something similar to climb on. These juicy slicing cucumbers are perfect for growing in containers because they are a bush variety.

No trellis is needed, and they're perfect for growing in containers. The 6 to 8-inch-long fruits have smooth, tender skin and sweet, crisp flesh.

Planting: Plant one plant per 12-inch pot, or 2 plants in a larger container that's at least 18 inches across. For larger planters, grow plants at final spacing of 8 to 10 inches apart.

Recipes: Slice and add to salads, or make **Tzatziki sauce**.



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"Pot of Gold" Chard

Isn't this chard beautiful? There are so many different varieties, and this one is my favorite. Like zucchini, you only need to plant one or two chard seeds and you'll soon have loads of plants.

Delicious, reliable and highly ornamental, these vigorous plants have crunchy golden stems contrasting with deep green leaves. They're perfect for containers or striking mixed borders.

Planting: Plant Pot of Gold Chard 8 inches apart and harvest the outside stalks first, leaving the inner ones to continue growing.

Recipes: Use chard leaves to make lettuce wraps or add to salad. Don't think your kids will eat chard?



PHOTO CREDIT: www.reneesgarden.com

"Jade Gem" Lettuce

I had no idea that lettuce would grow well in containers until I discovered Jade Gem. Aren't these adorable? Jade Gem has fat little rosettes of juicy-sweet, wavy leaves that look like a plump mini romaine.

Jade Gem grows quickly, and is ready to harvest in just over 30 days. Plant every couple of weeks for continued harvests.

Planting: Plant Jade Gem seeds 4-6 inches apart--several can fit in a container, as shown here.

Recipes: We love to make fresh salads with garden-fresh veggies, **homemade croutons**, and **Orange-Balsamic Vinaigrette**.

Container Gardening Tips

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- Be sure you're planting at the right time with a **customized vegetable planting schedule**.
- If outdoor cats are getting into your garden containers, **here are some ways to keep them out**.
- Don't use regular garden soil in your containers. Here's how to **choose the best soil for your container garden**.
- Once a month, apply diluted fertilizer to the containers. **I use this, although it's a little stinky**.

Comments

A pot of cherry tomatoes would be another great addition to the list.

I grow all my herbs: rosemary, thyme, oregano, parsley and basil in containers on my S-SW exposure terrace and they thrive!

I live in the city. My garden grows all but corn, and ALL in pots. You need at least 18in circumference for smaller single plants like pepper & eggplant. I grow any variety of tomatoes, but they need 24 inches across pots. Small pots don't hold enough moisture or nutrients. Water deeply once a week. Place tray under pots in very dry weeks of summer to hold water. Fertilize one scoop of vegie fertilizer tossed onto the soil then 'water it in', on the days you deep water. Once or twice a month. To keep the weight down, put large chunks of broke pottery and or thick rigid packing foam in bottom 1/3 of large pots. It also helps with drainage. Good luck this year!

My friend had great results using a large (open bottom) tub. All the potato 'seeds' went in the bottom with good loose planting mix. When the plants came growing towards the top,

she added more loose planting mix part way, & let plants grow again... until she got to the top. She pulled up the tub to take potatoes off the bottom. Buried in layers gave her higher yield. Open bottom tub made it easy to harvest. I was thinking I'd try her method. You have to use straight sided tub or use the wider side down, if you plan lifting tub to remove the potatoes.

This year I am doing ONLY container gardening. Our area is in severe drought and are VERY restricted in watering. But I have tanks that gather the little rain we do get. This year I am going to change my watering system. In the past I would water my containers daily (with a watering can) only to watch half (or more) drain right out:(I looked into buying cones and glass bulbs that water slowly but found a better way and cheaper!!!! I have found that using "smart water" brand disposable water bottles with the blue flip caps do a GREAT job. I fill the bottle, tip it into the container, and it takes about 20 minutes to drip into the container with NOTHING leaking out from the pot. Let me know what you do!

Another great use to water are large plastic bottles that pop comes in. Punch holes in the cap with a nail or drill, and put in soil, or hang above plants. This is a great repurpose of a litter product, and also release water slowly. Your kids can paint them great colors to add a great feature and make it a family project.

Your idea is great. We take the bottles hung upside down on Shepard's hooks above our container pots. We paint each bottle with either a pretty design or we paint them with the same plant (flower or veggie) in the container and then put the containers around in the yard. Fancy and we have had many compliments.

I have found that plastic totes and rubber totes from the good will make great containers even if they a hole or a crack. And they are cheap!!!

Can you use 5 gal paint containers, big heavy plastic ones that the pros use if they are cleaned out?

You could...but I would rather use food grade.... some restaurants get their pickles and condiments in 5-gallon buckets and will save some for you. I also got some nice semi-clear ones after running a want ad on Craigslist. I have used some that used to hold natural laundry soap, sold to me by a man who ran a coin-operated laundry. Only drawback, heavy and can hurt your back!

Starbucks gives away (free) their large buckets to anyone willing to take them.

Container plants can overheat. Some afternoon shade can help. But watering morning and afternoon could help also. My one tomato, planted with basil, and one pepper did real well in upper 90 degrees. You could paint your pots white.

AND.... veggies in pots are big feeders! I added a tbsp. of bone meal plus time release fertilizer to the top 4" of my potting soil before planting, plus more time release fert. after about 2 mos. due to almost daily watering. (A grown tomato or pepper requires 1 gal. water daily!) if plants get puny, feed with MiracleGro. Better luck next year!

Those rectangle pots are a joke! Tomatoes, especially, have a deep root system, so they need a big, deep pot. We are all organic...except for our potted plants. Miracle Gro potting "soil" is the easiest to find. Do not use the newer one for water retention. We had no luck with it. Get your big pot...5 gal. or larger and PLASTIC...and lay some cheesecloth or old pantyhose over the hole. Maybe a handful of gravel for drainage. Fill with potting soil, tamping it down well as you go. I add a small handful of bone meal and sprinkle time release fertilizer and work it into the top 4-5 inches. Plant ONE tomato or pepper plant per pot. Add stakes at this time also. I also plant 2-3 basil plants around the veggies. Basil is shallow rooted and won't compete. (Clip off any basil flowers as they form, so the plants won't die.) Place pot where you want it! You won't be moving it! Half a day of sun is a must...preferably morning. Our pots just get dappled afternoon sun. Water pot til top of soil is covered. Wait at least five minutes and then water at least twice more the same way. Heavy watering can just run out the sides. During hot weather, if soil has pulled away from the sides of the pots, use an old fork to loosen and stir the soil around the sides. An old timer told me to always water in the late afternoon, since plants grow at night. (??) but keep water off the leaves (fungal infections). A tomato plant can use one gallon of water a day, so water regularly. During drought, you can even collect used bath water! I add more time release fertilizer, maybe early July, and sometimes water with MiracleGro. We had lovely tomatoes, one or more a day, until August. Heat? Exhaustion? This year, I may plant one or two more in July. We had plenty of peppers too. I wish you better luck this year!

AND I have read that a little Epsom Salts when you get blossoms will prevent blossoms from dropping.

We have out Faith Mission garden ready for the S.M.A.R.T. kids[low income& homeless] to come do their thing we have 15 lg plastic cylinder's that cow food comes in and 8 above ground container made from rail road cross ties, soil & mulch are donated , I have been doing this for 7 yrs the kids got so much from this ,we put potatoes in the cylinders so the roots can grow deep ,tomatoes, green beans ,bell peppers, radish, cantaloupe cucumbers are put between the pop corn rows this is what we are planting this yr ,we start off with a classroom for our lesson then to a neighbor's back yard for the magic to work

Gorgeous vegetables grown in pots. I saw your post on Twitter and I thought I should share this wonderful product with you. TwistPot is a revolutionary new pot and tray system. These pots are ideally suited to a wide variety of plants. Vegetables that pretty much hate 'wet feet' such as Tomatoes, Peppers, Cucumbers, would do exceptionally well in these pots. If over watering happens accidentally, the pot can be raised to allow

surplus water drain away. There is plastic, and come in a range of colors and sizes. Please feel free to visit the website <http://maxipot.com/contact-us/> or via twitter @TwistPot

My backyard is huge, over 260 feet deep. But I'm getting older and an inground garden was getting too hard for me to weed and keep cleaned up. So I threw grass seed in the garden area, and I have a huge round tractor tire full of good Iowa black dirt, two half wine kegs, about 10 large planters, and a 8x4' above ground plastic garden spot. I get enough tomatoes, peppers, green beans and squash to keep me happy. And I can take a chair out, and sit and weed and clean around the plants. Then in the fall, I buy two bushels of tomatoes to freeze. And I'm done!

Eggplant, cucumber, peppers, and lettuce all sometimes get sun-scalded if they're in hot afternoon heated sun. Most of my garden gets sun from 10-4 if lucky. So I place those mentioned on the side of the garden that goes into shade earlier. Tomatoes on the other side which gets afternoon sun. That's one benefit in container gardening— you can move the pots by hand truck, or dragging to change placements of the pot. Crop rotation is easy because I change and remix the top 1/4 or more of the soil. I add any composted manure and fertilizer at the same time each spring. Burpee is selling a 'cloudy day' tomato this year, that I'm going to try. Remember best to use large pots or containers like tubs that are 18 inches for smaller veggies & herbs. Larger veggie plants need 24 inches or more. About same depth. You can use some drainage material in the bottom to lighten the pot. I bought pot saucers to keep water access during hot dry weather.

As far as container gardening I'm in zone 7, do you recommend planting seeds now or just wait another couple of weeks for the plants at a local nursery. How do you know which cucumber seeds to buy, there's so many? Thanks, any info is appreciated

I have crooked neck squash in 5 gal buckets. they got blooms on them but no squash. also my bell peppers and tomatoes has blooms but no tomatoes or bell peppers. they are in a rectangle box 13 inches deep. have back and hip problem so have them raised.

We live in desert, poor soil, lose most of our harvest to critters. Got idea recently to repurpose a defunct refrigerator into large raised garden box. Took doors and other parts off, placed on its back, blocked lower part, put landscape cloth and filled upper portion with soil. Planted veggies and companion flowers interspersed. Shared idea with neighbors and got several more fridges donated. Now have 8 planted with veggies and companion flowers. Perfect waist high, insulated, critters can't get to them! No more back-straining, less water and soil loss

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