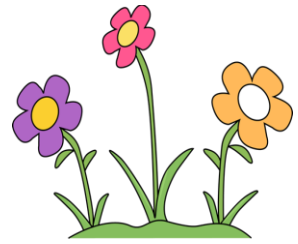


Fact Sheet: **BASICS OF CONTAINER PLANTING** **Interior and Exterior Decorating**



Many of your favorite plants grow well in containers. Plant Annuals, Biennials, Perennials, Shrubs, Vines, Herbs, Tomatoes and a variety of green and flowering vines to gracefully twine over terrace railings. Potted plants that bring nature inside enhance your home décor.



WATERING - How Much and How Often

Frequency of watering depends on season, location, plant size, plastic or clay pot and type of planting medium. There are no hard and fast rules. Make sure there is at least one drainage hole in the bottom of the container. Proper drainage is essential for healthy roots and prevents overwatering.

Better to check the surface of the soil in the pot by appearance and touch than watering on a set schedule. Wet soil will be dark in color while dry soil will be lighter in color. If the soil is dry a few inches down, the plants need watering. Water thoroughly each time. You can be sure that the entire root ball is moistened when water is dripping from drainage holes. While there are many types of water meter devices on the market, observation and the finger test are the best guide. Thirsty plants need generous drinks. So water thoroughly at intervals rather than frequently and sparingly. But in heat waves when temperature soar above 90 degrees you need to water once or even twice a day.

There is a fine line between too dry and soggy soil. Vines, shrubs, flowering plants and evergreens dry out quickly in summer heat. Too little too late is dangerous to their health. In general, early morning or early evening is the optimal time to water container plants so that there is time for excess water to evaporate before or after the heat of the day.



WATERING HOUSE PLANTS

Beware of *wet feet*. Put pebbles in saucers. Root rot results when plants sit too long in water. Place a dish with water near indoor plants that need a humid environment. When plants are wintering or permanently indoors and too heavy to lift, a dolly with castors so excess water can be mopped and avoid damage to floors is a practical solution. (On terraces, puddles dry quickly in sun.)

FERTILIZING

What kind, how much? The easiest method is to incorporate a slow release fertilizer into the soil when planting or top-dress soil if you are working with a *store bought* plant. You can add fertilizer as directed while watering. Slow release or controlled release fertilizers will generally provide nutrition for 2 to 3 months.

MULCH AND COMPOST

Mulch composed of dead leaves and branches, wood chips, and bark on top of the soil around plants maintains moisture. Add organic matter saved from leftovers such as coffee grounds, corn stalks, vegetable peelings and you have compost. Layering a few inches over the topsoil adds nutrients to perennials during the growing season. Additional layers protect root system during the winter months insulating younger plants from ice and snow. Remove all mulch and compost in Spring to thaw the soil rapidly.

** Free compost is available at the Central Park Compost center located at the end of the 102nd St transverse (east side of the through road). Take a shopping cart, a box and shovel or trowel and bring some home for yourself and neighbors. The Parks Department makes it up by working over leaves, branches and other materials.*

Gardening Information and Updates
www.parkwestcommunitynetwork.org

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