

## SELECTING POTS

### Fact Sheet: Home and Terrace Gardening Starting Out



#### Clay or Plastic

The natural terracotta look of clay harmonizes with foliage and flowers. Aging enhances the traditional look. It is porous, allowing air and water to be utilized by the fine roots at the edge of the soil ball. Clay pots help remove excess moisture from the soil. Cacti needing a dry soil do best in clay. On terraces, harder clay pots protect against wintry winds, cold and rapid temperature change. Be sure to soak new pots overnight in water before using.

Recyclable easily disposable plastic is environmentally friendly. Plastic pots are a good choice if plants are not frequently watered. They are lightweight, strong and flexible. They come in varied colors to coordinate with interior and exterior decor. A disadvantage is thinner walls that don't insulate roots and can act as solar collectors. A shadier location and more frequent watering prevent plants from wilting quickly from heat buildup.



#### Size

For container plants, think about how large it will grow. Frequent repotting is hard on the plant and the owner. Larger plants require heavier and stronger pot materials for stability, protection against tipping and strong outdoor winds. Leaves turning yellow and dropping off is a sign that a plant needs repotting. One pot size larger each time is the rule to accommodate root growth. Plants in proportion to pot size make a good appearance.

On the balcony it is easy to water plants too heavy for lifting. Water overflow can be mopped up. Indoors *wet feet* are a problem when saucers fill with water. One solution is using dollies with casters for easy movement to light locations and watering without damage to floors.

## **Container volume affects maintenance.**

How big will the growing plants get? Larger, thicker pots or insulated pots will do a better job protecting overwintering roots. Larger pots need less frequent watering than smaller pots.

The plant should look like it fits without being squeezed into the container. Never trim the roots to make the plant fit the pot. The pot should be big enough and deep enough for the plant.



## **Ornamental Containers**

Whatever looks pretty as long as you take care of drainage. If you are mechanical punch a hole, or put plant into plastic holder so it needs less watering. Be sure not to let it sit in water.