



Top tips to plant, grow and care for a container garden

STATEPOINT - Container gardens are a viable and popular cultivation option, especially for those who have limited sun-exposed spaces or are looking to start small and learn the basics of gardening.

“Containers, whether bought or recycled, are a great place to plant herb and vegetable gardens,” says landscape designer, Doug Scott of Redeem Your Ground in Atlanta, Ga. “But to get it right, there are a few things to keep in mind.”

To help you successfully cultivate a container garden, Scott offers the following pointers:

- Well-drained, not dry or overly wet soil, is necessary for herb and vegetable growth, so using bottom-draining pots with a peat-based potting soil specifically formulated for herbs

and veggies will facilitate proper soil drainage and moisture retention.

- The proper container size depends on what you’ll be growing. Most small herbs do well in pots as small as eight inches in diameter, while larger plants may require a gallon pot or larger. For visual interest, consider repurposing items around the house to use as your container, such as an old pail.

- Incorporate a “thriller, filler, spiller” planting approach to maximize space and aesthetic appeal. This means tall focal plants in back, middle layer plants that fill in, and plants that will cascade over the container in front.

- Soil dries out more quickly in container gardens than garden beds, especially if you place containers outdoors in the sun.



Courtesy Statepoint
Landscape designer, Doug Scott has partnered with Exmark, on a video series for DIY homeowners called “Done in a Weekend.” Among the free videos is “Contain Your Enthusiasm,” offering tips to help you successfully plant, grow and care for herbs and vegetable container gardens.

Perform daily soil moisture checks. You may need to water outdoor container gardens every day -- and possibly twice a day -- in extremely hot weather.

- Place your container garden where it will get the optimal amount of sunlight -- between six and eight hours a day. The beauty of container gardens is their

movability. You can even follow the sun as exposure changes throughout the seasons. Always refer to the care tags on the specific plant to determine a prime location.

- Gardens planted in a container are entirely dependent on you to provide nutrients. Start out with an organic, rich potting soil formulated for container gardens. Then, going forward, fertilize your container every two to four weeks by pouring a nutrient-rich liquid solution directly into the soil.

- Don’t forget to reap what you sow. Harvesting will generally help increase yields and prevent plants from outgrowing their containers. For best results, use this five-step method: water plants before harvesting, make clean cuts, keep them clean, dry your

harvest quickly and store them away from sunlight and moisture.

More expert advice is available online. Scott has partnered with Exmark, a leading manufacturer of commercial mowers and equipment on a video series for DIY homeowners called “Done in a Weekend.” Among the free videos is “Contain Your Enthusiasm,” offering tips to help you successfully plant, grow and care for herbs and vegetable container gardens. To view the video, as well as access other videos in the series covering a range of home and garden topics, visit Exmark.com/DIY.

There are a few important considerations that every container gardener should know. Be sure you’re equipped with the proper tools and knowledge before getting started.

Tips to safely combat home bug invasions

STATEPOINT - Thanks to an unusually warm, wet winter, experts predict that Americans will face an extra buggy summer. According to the bi-annual Bug Barometer, a seasonal projection from the National Pest Management Association, conditions are ripe for pesky pests

of all stripes to be out in full force. And more bugs outside will likely mean more bugs trying to enter your house.

“Expect pest populations to rise significantly as spring showers and summer sun make the perfect conditions for these vectors to flourish,” says entomologist, Gabriela Nine. “People should take the necessary precautions to prepare for approaching pests. These pests, such as roaches and ants, are knowledgeable at finding both food and shelter in our homes this time of year, habitually squeezing through the tiniest of spaces or walking through

the front door to enjoy all our homes have to offer.” To combat the spike in ants, cockroaches, termites and other pests, and ensure they don’t encroach on your home turf, consider the following tips:

- Mind moisture. Survey your home and yard and take steps to manage any locations where there is moisture build-up on surfaces or standing water,

which can invite mosquitoes and other bugs to breed on your property.

- Feed yourself -- not pests. Be sure to seal containers securely and store them properly in the fridge and cabinets. Sweep up the kitchen on a daily basis and wipe down tables and counters after preparing and eating meals to eliminate spills and crumbs.

- Spray with confidence.

Over 90 percent of people are concerned about having bugs in their home, according to a survey conducted by Zevo. At the same time, almost as many -- 87 percent -- are concerned about the ingredients in traditional bug killer sprays for use in the home. The good news? There are effective ways to kill bugs using friendly ingredients.

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How to extend the life of your used car

STATEPOINT - Nearly 70 percent of all car sales are used vehicles, thanks to the rising costs of new cars and the increasing quality of their used counterparts. While buying a previously owned vehicle makes the best financial sense in a lot of cases, experts say there are some things to keep in mind.

“To keep everyone on the road safe and protect your purchase, all drivers need to stay up-to-date on car maintenance,” says Doug Turner, director of service operations at Byrider, the nation’s largest used car and finance network of dealerships. “This is especially true for those with used cars.”

April is National Car Care Month and to help you extend the life of your used car, the automotive experts at Byrider are offering the following tips:

- Follow the maintenance recommendations of the manufacturer.
- Caring for a vehicle is similar to caring for one-

self -- take preventative steps to help keep your car healthy. Pay special attention to issues, noises or warning signs that could indicate your vehicle needs maintenance. Warning lights on your dashboard are illuminated for a reason. Understand what they mean and address them as-needed.

- Prevent rust and other issues by keeping the interior and exterior of your vehicle clean.

- Use a trusted repair service that hires Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)-certified technicians. This certification can make a big difference when it comes to quality repairs and maintenance.

- Complete as-needed or at a minimum, an annual inspection, on the vehicle. Keep in mind that different seasons of the year require different inspections and repairs.

- Use quality parts.
- Fill your vehicle with the proper gas. Use premium if the vehicle manu-

facturer suggests it.

- Regular oil changes will keep your car running as smoothly as possible. Be sure to use the proper oil per the manufacturer recommendations.

- When buying a vehicle, stick to retail dealers that put cars through a detailed inspection process. This will help to ensure a given vehicle’s safety and reliability. At the same time, consider dealers with an attached service department. “Your relationship with the dealership shouldn’t end once you drive the car off the lot,” adds Turner. In the case of Byrider, every car sold comes with a warranty or optional service agreement, as well as discounted parts, labor and service. To learn more, visit byrider.com.

A used vehicle can be a great investment. Extend the life of your car and stay safer on the roads by making smart purchasing decisions and taking a proactive approach to maintenance.

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Affordable DIY projects to transform your home

STATEPOINT - Transformative home renovations don't need to be complicated, nor do they need to cost an arm and a leg. There are plenty of affordable DIY projects you can do in a weekend to add beauty to your home's indoor and outdoor spaces. Here are a few to consider:

- **Instant Ambiance:** Most often associated with party decor, string lighting hung above back patios and decks can be used to create everyday ambiance. As for how to string the lights, the possibilities are endless. You may prefer taut, clean lines, slack zig-zags or concentric circles. Just be sure to use weatherproof lighting designed to withstand the elements.

- **Stone Patio:** A drab concrete patio, pool deck, garage floor or walkway

can be an eyesore. Whether your concrete is older and looking stressed, shedding its latest coat of paint, slippery, stained -- or new, but just gray and lifeless, there's a very easy way to spruce things up that doesn't require replacing the materials or involving a contractor. With a pre-mixed, factory-tinted stone coating system, such as the patent-pending SpreadStone Decorative Concrete Resurfacing Kit, just about anyone can add authentic stone character to any concrete floor or wall. It not only boosts aesthetics, but also adds traction for safer walking surfaces. The real stone coating performs well in all climates, standing up to water, snow, salt, UV exposure and extreme cold and heat.

"The best part? Appli-



Courtesy Statepoint

You can now roll a new stone surface over any existing countertop made of laminate, cultured marble, concrete, wood, tile and other solid surface with the high-performance SpreadStone Mineral Select Countertop Refinishing Kit from Daich Coatings.

cation is fast and simple and you don't need to be an artist to achieve great results," says renovation expert, James Carey, co-host of "On the House," a national home improve-

ment show.

- **Mount Shelving:** Installing floating shelves onto otherwise bare walls adds coziness to living spaces while creating smart storage. The lightweight, easy-

to-install Ambrosia Maple Rustic Mantel Shelf from Ornamental Mouldings & Millwork is a good choice, as it can be used as either a stand-alone floating shelf or fireplace mantel, and can be left as-is or stained to complement other elements in the room.

- **Stone Countertops:** Have you always wanted real stone countertops but didn't want to spend thousands on a complete remodel? You can now roll a new stone surface over any existing countertop made of laminate, cultured marble, concrete, wood, tile and other solid surface with the high-performance SpreadStone Mineral Select Countertop Refinishing Kit from Daich Coatings.

Available in 10 colors, all of which feature mineral accents and highlights found

in natural mined rock, the proprietary stone technology gives an elegant, environmentally-friendly facelift to surfaces in kitchens, bathrooms and other home interiors.

"If you can use a roller and paintbrush, you can create a new stone surface using this product," says Peter Daich, president of Daich Coatings. "It's an affordable, simple alternative to putting in a new stone slab and looks just as great."

Unfortunately, there are many homeowners who avoid desired renovations, assuming that in order to make a true impact, they'll need a huge budget and a lot of time. The truth is that there are transformative DIY updates you can execute affordably in just one weekend.

Top ways to lighten up your home workspace

STATEPOINT - Many people have found themselves working from home. Whether setting up shop at the kitchen table or creating a complete home office, here are simple hacks to make your new work environment comfortable and productive.

"No matter which room becomes your workspace, proper lighting plays a key role in avoiding fatigue, eye strain and other discomforts," said Jennifer Kis, director of marketing communications, Progress Lighting.

Begin by defining your workspace. Setting up on the kitchen or dining table can work -- temporarily. The upside is that it's quick and easy. But these rooms are typically high-traffic areas, leading to distractions. Plus, you might have to pack up work at mealtimes. Instead, re-purpose a small table and chair and place it in an out-of-the-way spot, such as a stairwell or bedroom corner.

Next, think about lighting. Layering light is a basic technique that should be used in every room, but especially home offices.

"Balance the lighting for different times of day. Natural light for day, layered



Courtesy Statepoint

Lighting can make or break a home office. Be sure to set yourself up for maximum productivity and comfort.

light for afternoon and task lighting at night," recommends Piper Stromatt, lead designer and partner for Curate Custom Homes. "There are three layers of light to consider: ambient or general light, task lighting and decorative or accent lighting."

Select a location with a good source of ambient light. Natural light is ideal: it diffuses throughout the space, bouncing off walls and ceilings to cut down on glare that can reflect on the

computer monitor and the shiny desk surface.

"When selecting ambient light sources, the goal is to illuminate the entire space without creating undue glare and contrast, which can lead to headaches and eye strain," says Kis. "If possible, avoid using overhead ceiling fixtures as the primary source of lighting. If that's the only option, use a dimmer switch to vary light levels as needed."

Positioning your work-

space correctly also helps. For rooms with natural light, place your desk perpendicular to the window, ideally facing north or south so that sunlight doesn't cast shadows at certain times of the day. If an overhead fixture is the only light source, situate your workstation so that the light shines from behind it.

"Make sure your home office suits your performance under particular lighting conditions," says Stromatt, who recommends the following tips:

- Don't set your monitor in front of the window; the bright background light shining behind the screen causes eye strain.

- Place your chair at least arm's length from the screen so that it can be seen without reading glasses or squinting.

- Add LED tape lighting behind your monitor or under a desk for diffused light.

- Use solar shades to soften lighting and lessen heat.

After setting up a glare-free workstation, add task lighting. Use dedicated light sources such as desk lamps for tasks like paperwork and filing. Place direct task lights on the opposite side of the hand you write with to avoid casting shadows onto

your work.

Finally, add accent lighting for visual appeal. Frame your workspace with desk lamps or install a permanent fixture on a dimmer switch, such as

a pendant hung directly over the desk. Wall sconces can throw light on decorative objects in the room.

BUGS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

For example, Zevo Instant Action Bug Killer Sprays which work on a broad range of household insects, including ants, roaches, flies, fruit flies, gnats and spiders, are comprised of essential oils that target nerve receptors vital to insects, not people or pets. Made without harsh chemicals, Zevo sprays are deadly to bugs and safe for use around people and pets when used as directed, making them a household essential, particularly in the warmer months. For more information, visit www.zevoinsect.com.

- Defend entry points.

Keep doors, windows and the garage -- the typical entry points for bugs -- closed as much as possible. You can also take additional defensive action in areas that get high bug traffic with Zevo Flying Insect Traps, which plug into outlets and use multi-spectrum light technology and a body heat attractant to lure in flying bugs for round-the-clock protection.

Insects are not only icky, they can pose threats to people and property. But there is no need to bug out. With a few preventive measures and the means to stop bugs in their tracks -- or flight path -- you can keep your home safer and more comfortable this season.

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