

May Newsletter

Patty's Plants

Using Container Gardens in your Outdoor Living Space

You don't have to be an expert in flowers and plants to be successful in container gardening. Anyone can grow plants in containers with a few easy tips. I will give you these tips and many ideas to choose from in this newsletter. Imagine having fun creating your very own mini garden. Want a tropical paradise? Use large leaf plants such as bananas, cannas and palms in making it your vacation destination this summer. Blooming hibiscus, Mandevilla, tropical fruits can be grown in containers right in your own backyard. Or plant vegetables and herbs in containers to use fresh while grilling out this summer. Container gardening is quick, easy and less expensive than planting a

large garden. One that you may not have time to work in. In this newsletter I will give you many different plant options to create your own special outdoor container garden. There will be some questions to ask yourself first. Such as, What plants will work in the area I have? Will any container work? What type of soil is good for containers? I will answer all of questions and more. Let's get growing.



Where do I want to put my containers?

Pick your site: Do you have sun, shade or a little of each? Is it windy? How long is the sun in those areas? Most herbs, flowering tropicals would be happy with 5 to 6 hours of sun. If there is too much shade your herbs will be floppy and your blooming tropicals will have very little flowering. Be aware of what time of day the sun hits each area of your garden. Check to see how windy the area is. You might have to put in some-

thing to protect the more tender herbs or flowering containers. Maybe use a screen like a container with a trellis that you can put a tropical blooming vine on. Any feature that would block the wind. Banana trees, palms, elephant ear can all take a little afternoon shade. Use them as a screen or backdrop around your outdoor living space. The main thing is to know what type of plants you have and what is the best location for them.

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Inside this issue:

What type of container should I use?	2
Do I need special soil?	2
When I get my container planted how do I take care of it?	2
How do I know what flowers or plants will work?	3
What if my flowers get bugs?	3
Container Gardening	4
6 Basic steps for growing healthy tropical plants	4

Coming May 5th

to 220 S. Janesville St.
Milton, WI.

"Patty's Plants"

Natural and Organic

Garden Supply

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- I will also be carrying organic herbs, veggies and flowering plants as well as container gardens and hanging baskets. E-mail me at: patty@pattysplants.com

What type of container should I use?

It must have drainage holes: Any container will work as long as it has good drainage. Plant roots need oxygen if they are in a closed container the roots can't breathe. Stones in the bottom are not an option, eventually the water can build up and it will start rotting the root system of the plants. Consider the size of the plants or plant you want to grow. There must be enough room in the container for the plants roots to grow or the plants growth could be stunted. Clay pots will dry out faster than plastic pots. The clay adsorbs the extra moisture. Why not use some recycled



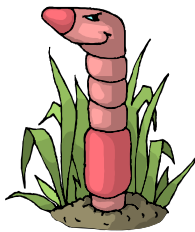
Containers must have good drainage.

containers? As long as you drill holes in them anything will work. Try an old child's wagon, a broken watering can, a rusty metal wheelbarrow, an old garden boot, a wash tub or a chair missing the seat. The list is endless. You can find things at resale shops, rummage sales and even out in your own garage. Let your creative side shine.



Do I need special soil?

Don't use garden dirt. Use a good quality potting mix. Garden dirt is too heavy, it will not drain as well. It will be full of weed seeds and may have diseases that can hurt your plants. I recommend using worm castings to any good potting soil to get your plants off to a great start. In a very sunny spot you can add soil moist to your mix or purchase a mix already with



this in it. There are some wonderful organic soil blends and moisture control additives you can purchase. Some of the organic soil blends have worm casting already in the mix.

See the article at:

www.pattysplants.com on: "Why use worm castings."

When I get my container planted how do I take care of it?

Water, fertilize and deadhead. Check your planter daily, usually in the morning. Water it thoroughly so the water drains out the bottom. This way you know the entire root system is watered. Don't let the planter sit in water for more than 15 minutes. If it's not soaking it up it's plenty wet. There are all different types of fertilizers. From water-soluble to granular to organic. You can fertilize with a diluted solution every time you water or once a month using a granular slow-release fertilizer.

Pruning or deadheading will help your flowers and plants stay in the best shape by growing and filling in more. Remember the larger your container grows the more you'll have to check it for watering.



How do I know what flowers or plants will work?

Do a little research. Or ask a salesperson to help you pick the right plants for your area. Tell them whether you have sun or shade. Tell them if you want a container for flowers, herbs, veggies or even tropical plants to make your backyard living space an instant jungle. Here are just few choices for tropical and annuals plants:

Hibiscus— This is one of the most popular tropical tree or shrub. You can grow it in the house and it will bloom year round if you have a sunny area. Outside, they also need lots of sun and like the temperature to stay above 65*

Mandevilla-This is a vigorous vine with large rough leaves in the pink and white varieties, smaller leaves in the yellow. It can grow 8 to 10 feet and must have a good support system. Their large trumpet flowers are sure to attract hummingbirds. They love it sunny and hot.

Elephant ear (*Alocasia esculenta*): Dramatic, tropical tuberous perennial with huge lush foliage arising from the base on long stems. Some cultivars, such as 'Protodora Shield' have enormous leaves, up to 3' long. Use 'Black Magic' for its striking velvety, purple-black leaves, which are up to 2' long.

Canna (*Canna x generalis*): A fast growing plant grown for its beautiful foliage and colorful clusters of gladiolus-like flowers. Foliage is huge and

banana-like, often in bold, dark colors, sometimes striped; it remains beautiful until frost. Blooms throughout the summer.

Coleus (*Solenostemon scutellarioides*): For season-long interest, few plants provide as much variety of brilliantly colored foliage, leaf shape and plant form as coleus. Foliage ranges from velvety deep purple to multi-colored varieties, on plants that can be upright, bushy, or cascading.

Lantana (*Lantana camara*): A sprawling, tropical, floriferous shrub grown for its vibrant verbena-like flowers in bright and multi-colored hues. Depending on variety, they can be upright and shrubby or sprawling, weeping, or trailing.

Go to :www.pattysplants.com

for a list of blooming tropical patio plants .



What if my flowers get bugs?

Find out whether it's a good bug or a bad bug.

Ladybugs are good bugs, aphids are not. Bring a sample of your pest (in a baggie) to your local garden shop so someone can identify it. They will help you find the right solution to your problems. works and what doesn't.

Good Bugs and Bad Bugs

Before you run to get any pest control out of your garage or garden shed first try to identify what kind of bug it is.

Assess the damage and see if it's something you can live with. Is it just cosmetic or is it going to effect the health of the plants. Many plants will out grow minor

damage. The pest may have already left the area. If you must take care of the problem determine the best way to care of it. There are a lot of new products available that are organic. But even some of those can hurt the beneficial insects. A good daily spray of water will discourage some of those nasty pests. Encourage beneficial insects: lady bugs eat hundreds of aphids a day. Birds, bats, frogs and even snakes eat many pests. Make your garden friendly for these hungry creatures. Buy or build bird, bat butterfly and toad houses.



Don't let good bugs pack up and fly away

Container Gardening Tip

The important thing to remember in growing container gardens is that, you are the caregiver and the artist of this mini garden. With the tips I have given in this newsletter you will have a beautiful and successful container garden for the entire summer.

Just remember: use sun-loving plants for sun and shade-loving plants for shade and don't forget to check it for water and insects daily. So you and your container flowers and plants can have a healthy and stress free summer this year.



6 BASICS STEPS FOR HEALTHY OUTDOOR & INDOOR BLOOMING TROPICAL PLANTS

1: **LIGHT**: Blooming tropicals need lots of light to flower. Outside, most can take full sun to bright indirect or filtered sun. Inside, they should have at least 4 hours of direct sun. With bright light the rest of the day.

2: **WATERING**: Outdoor and indoor watering changes with the weather. Outside, plants have to cope with wind, rain and hot sunny days. They dry out much more quickly (if there hasn't been any rain, of course.) So you must check them everyday and sometimes twice a day. Inside, you also need to check them often. But unless they are in a very hot and sunny room, they may only need water once a week.

3: **FERTILIZING**: Blooming tropicals need more water so they also need to be fertilized often. Outside, when you water more frequently you may need to fertilize twice a week. Or you may use a lower rate and use it every time you water. Inside, you can fertilize once every other watering or you may also use a lower rate every time you water. Winter fertilizing is very different. The plants aren't growing as much and don't need to be watered as often. So once a month is more than enough. For blooming use a higher phosphorous fertilizer. The middle number is higher like, 15-30-15 or blossom booster 10-50-10.

4: **SOILS AND REPOTTING**: When you 1st purchase your tropical plant, they are in very light weight pots. This might work for awhile inside but outside these will never work. The container you choose is very important as is the soil you put in it. Clay absorbs extra moisture where as plastic and glazed hold it in. For clay, I would recommend using moisture crystals or potting soils that already have it in them. A good soil-less mix is fine for any of these containers but they can also be very light and dry out quickly. I like to add a little *Worm Castings*. It adds a little more weight as well as micro-nutrients.

5: **PRUNING**: There are different times to prune blooming tropical plants. They can be pruned all summer long to keep them in shape. In the fall you need to prune the vining plants off their trellis just to take them back in the house. Tree forms need to stay in shape, so sometimes you have to be brave and prune the flowers off. This will benefit them in the long run by keeping them full.

6: **PESTS AND DISEASES**: All plants tropical or otherwise are susceptible to insects and diseases. It's always a good idea to keep some type of bug and fungus spray around just in case of an outbreak or just as a precaution.

www.pattysplants.com or e-mail : patty@pattysplants.com