

Container Plants

Growing plants in containers can be both challenging and rewarding. There are many native plants which can be successfully grown in pots. Experiment with your plant selection and enjoy the challenge of growing something different.

What are the advantages of growing plants in containers?

- There are many beautiful native plants we would love to have growing, but our gardens may not provide the conditions for the particular plant of our choice. In a container, the right aspect, the right type of soil and the right drainage conditions will make it possible for the plant to flourish.
- Garden spaces are becoming smaller. For some of us, there is no garden space. If you live in a flat or unit, the only way to grow any plant is in a container.
- Attractive pot plants can be used to enhance any verandah, courtyard or be used indoors. Pot plants can be '**portable gardens**'. They can be moved from place to place to suit the occasion or importantly, moved with you when you move house.
- Native plant species are being endangered as their habitats are destroyed. Their conservation may depend on people maintaining them in garden situations. Growing plants successfully in containers may be a valuable contribution to this cause.

Are plants easy to grow in containers?

A garden plant may survive with lack of attention but a plant grown in a container needs continuing care to provide the right amounts of food, light and moisture to ensure its survival.

What plants should I grow?

Choose the right plant to suit the position you want to place the pot, remembering that growth, size and the requirements of the plant will be important. A plant which requires warmth and light will not flourish in a cool, shady corner.

What type of container?

There are many containers both decorative and functional from which to choose. Choose containers to suit the plant and the position. Any container should be slightly larger than the plant and in proportion to its size. It must have good and adequate drainage holes. Plastic pots which are light to handle can be placed within elaborate decorative pots and can be easily moved. Hanging baskets, logs, large tubs, window boxes or terracotta pipes can also be used. Water-well pots take a lot of the pain out of watering, and are particularly suitable for moisture loving plants and for hairy-leaved plants which may rot with direct watering. The choice is yours.

What type of potting mix?

Ordinary garden soil is not recommended for plants in containers. A good commercial potting mix, preferably one which carries the Australian Standard should be used. These mixtures ensure good drainage and contain all the elements which encourage good plant growth.

What type of fertiliser?

Native plants grow best with the use of fertilisers especially formulated for Australian plants. A slow release fertiliser for native plants is readily available.

Some guidelines for growing Australian plants in containers

- Water with care as it is easy to either over-water or to allow a container plant to dry out.
- If a plant has become very dry, soak the plant in a bucket of water until the bubbles stop rising.
- Fertilise regularly and according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Tip prune constantly to maintain shape and compactness of the plant. Rotate for even growth.
- Check for pests and diseases. If used indoors, regularly move the plant to a protected position outside for a 'period of rest'.