



Parks and Landscape Services Division

Container gardening for wildlife

Type of container

Any shape or size of container will do as long as there is a minimum depth of 6-8 inches and it is sturdy enough to be filled with compost.

The container must have drainage holes to prevent the compost becoming waterlogged.

To ensure good drainage place a 2 inch layer of coarse gravel or small stones in the bottom of the container. This will also provide weight if the container is tall and may become top heavy. Broken pieces of pottery can also be used.

To provide drainage without weight use broken up pieces of polystyrene packaging. Standing the container on bricks or decorative feet will improve drainage.

Type of compost

For environmental reasons it is best to use an organic peat-free multipurpose or potting compost but if this is not available any commercial multipurpose or potting compost may be used. Composts without soil are more suitable for hanging baskets or for containers which need to be moved around as they are lighter. Those containing soil (usually called John Innes composts) would be more suitable for sunny positions as they would dry out more slowly.

Watering

Never let containers dry out as they are difficult to re-wet. Most plants in containers need daily watering during the summer and very little in winter. Always water the soil under the foliage otherwise most of the water will run off.

Feeding and aftercare

If your plants are perennials, meaning plants that live for several years or more, you may need to feed them as the nutrients in the compost are used up. You can do this in two ways, top dressing or liquid feeding.

Top dressing involves putting a layer of fresh compost on the top of the existing compost. If the container is already very full it may be possible to scrape a layer off the top, discard it and add fresh compost.

Liquid feeding involves adding nutrients in liquid form when you water. Liquid feeds are widely available, liquid seaweed is particularly good. Avoid feeds with high nitrogen as this promotes leafy growth at the expense of flowers.

If your container has mainly wild flowers you probably won't need to liquid feed as these plants prefer poor conditions.

Re-potting

Your plants may outgrow their container in time. It is best to pot on when the plant is not in active growth, usually early spring. Always use fresh compost when potting on. Don't choose a container which is a great deal bigger than the existing one. It is best to choose one that is a couple of sizes bigger rather than one which will dwarf the plants.

Suitable Plants

The following plants should be widely available from nurseries and garden centres. **Few are wild plants but all attract hoverflies, beneficial insects, honeybees, bumblebees or birds.** Some of these have to grow from seed but are very easy to grow. The plants are classified as annuals (a) which grow for one year only, biennials (b) which take two years to grow and flower, perennials (p) which live for several years at least and die back in winter and shrubs (s) which are long lived woody plants.

Honey bees Runner beans (a) Wallflowers (b) Rosemary (s) <i>Arabis</i> (p) <i>Limnanthes</i> (a) Borage(a) Candytuft (p) <i>Cotoneaster Horizontalis</i> (s) Sunflowers (a)	Butterflies and Moths <i>Aubretia</i> (p) Candytuft (p) Hebe "Great Orme" or "Midsummer Beauty" (s) <i>Sedum spectabile</i> (p) Honesty (b) Lavender (s) Mint (p) Michelmas daisy(p) Sweet William (b) Globe thistle (p) Night scented stock (a) <i>Nicotiana</i> (a)	Bumblebees Bergamot (p) Birdsfoot trefoil (p) Honeysuckle(climber) Knapweed (p) Lungwort (p) <i>Echium vulgare</i> (a) <i>Petunia</i> (single) (a) Snap dragon (a)	Hoverflies & beneficial insects Californian poppies (a) <i>Convolvulus</i> (a) Pot Marigold (a) Cornflower (a) Coriander (a) Fennel (p) Sweet Alyssum (a) <i>Viburnum tinus</i> (s) Teasel (b) <i>Nasturtium</i> (a)	Trees & shrubs that provide fruit & berries Japanese Quince Cotoneaster Hawthorn Holly Firethorn (<i>Pyracantha</i>) Elder Snowberry <i>Viburnum</i> Guelder Rose Spindle Blackberry
Flowers that provide nectar & pollen Yarrow Dill Aster Pot marigold Californian poppy Sunflower Lovage Baby Blue Eyes Willow Thyme Honeysuckle	Flowers that provide seed for birds Snapdragon Cosmos Globe Thistle Sunflower Lavender Honesty Roe Campion Forget-me-Not Evening Primrose Golden Rod Phlox			

The following plants are suitable for hanging baskets: Petunias, trailing Nasturtiums, Pot marigolds, *Aubretia* and *Limnanthes*.

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