



Virginia Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program

Starting Your Own Container Garden - Quick Tips

1. Choose a Container

- Window boxes, buckets, wine barrels, old recycling bins, bags of potting soil with holes poked in the bottom, milk jugs, clothes baskets lined with plastic, pots with drainage, hanging baskets, and creative items like boots
- Make sure container has holes on the bottom

2. What Can You Grow?

- Vegetables, flowers, fruits, herbs, perennials, shrubs, small trees, tropical plants, and annuals
- Vegetables that grow well in containers: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, green onions, beans, lettuce, squash, radishes, parsley, spinach, broccoli, carrots, turnips
- Use SNAP benefits to buy seeds!

3. Use Potting Soil

4. Location

- Outdoors: Anywhere that gets at least 6 hours of sunlight and is easy to get to. Move plant to shelter when weather is bad.
- Indoors: Place plants near bright, south-facing window. Windowsills can work for smaller plants like herbs!

5. Water Often

- 1-2 times a day; check soil to see if water is needed

Try These Container Garden Friendly FNP Recipes:

- [Eggplant Ratatouille](#)
- [Swiss Chard and Cranberries](#)
- [Strawberry Spinach Salad](#)

More Resources:

- [VCE's Home Vegetable Gardening](#)
- [VCE's Vegetable Gardening in Containers](#)
- [VCE's Container and Raised Bed Gardening](#)
- [Smart Gardener](#)
- [Illinois Extension's Successful Container Gardens](#)
- [New Hampshire Extension's Growing Vegetables in Containers](#)

Use the chart below as a guide:

Information for Growing Vegetables in Containers

Vegetable* Light Requirement**	Minimum Container Size	Distance (inches) Between Plants in Containers	Days from Seed to Harvest	Comments
Beans, bush FS	2 gal.	2-3	45-60	Several plantings, two-week intervals
Beets FS/PS	1/2 gal.	2-3	50-60	Thin plants when 6 to 8 inches tall
Carrots FS/PS	1 qt.	2-3	65-80	Several plantings, two-week intervals
Cabbage FS/PS	5 gal.	12-18	65-120	Requires fertile soil
Chard, Swiss FS/PS	1/2 gal.	4-6	30-40	Harvest leaves for long yield
Cucumbers FS	5 gal.	14-18	70-80	Require hot weather, vining types need support
Eggplant FS	5 gal.	1 plant per container	75-100	Requires fertile soil
Kale FS/PS	5 gal.	10-15	55-65	Harvest leaves
Lettuce, leaf PS	1/2 gal.	4-6	30-35	Harvest leaves
Mustard greens PS	1/2 gal.	4-5	35-40	Several plantings, two-week intervals
Onions, green FS/PS	1/2 gal.	2-3	70-100	Require lots of moisture
Peppers, Bell FS	2 gal.	1 plant per container	110-120	Require hot weather
Radishes FS/PS	1 pint	1	25-35	Several plantings, weekly intervals
Squash, summer FS	5 gal.	1 plant per container	50-60	Plant only bush type
Tomatoes FS	5 gal.	1 plant per container	55-100	Stake and prune or cage
Tomatoes, cherry FS	1 gal.	1 plant per container	55-100	Helps to stake and prune
Turnips FS/PS	3 gal.	2-3	30-60	Harvest leaves and roots

* Consult seed catalogs for varieties adapted to container culture.

** FS=Full sun • FS/PS= Full sun; tolerates partial shade • PS=Partial shade"