

Vegetable Gardening in Containers

Container vegetable production is somewhat more demanding than growing flowers and other ornamentals in containers. Quality of most vegetables is based on the soil's ability to provide a constant supply of water and nutrients. Vegetables become strong flavored, stringy, and tough under dry or low fertility conditions. With the limited root spread in a container, the gardener must frequently and regularly supply water and fertilizer. In growing container flowers, minor lapses in daily care may interrupt flower production, but flowering eventually resumes with returned quality care. With container vegetables, minor lapses in daily care may significantly reduce produce quality.

Warm Season Vegetables

Warm season vegetables prefer warmer summer temperatures (70°F to 95°F) and are intolerant of frost. They are typically planted after the average spring frost date as summery weather moves into the area. Along the Colorado Front Range, planting time would be mid-May to early June. Warm season crops need full sun.

Cool Season Vegetables

Cool season vegetables prefer the cool growing temperatures (60°F to 80°F) of spring and fall. Most are intolerant of summer heat. They do tolerate light frosts. Leafy and root vegetables prefer full sun, but are tolerant of partial shade. They are intolerant of reflected heat during the summer season.

Spring crops are typically planted two to four weeks before the average spring frost date. Along the Colorado Front Range, spring planting times are mid-April to early-May. Most are replanted in mid-July to mid-August for a fall harvest.

The quality of these vegetables is directly related to their ability to grow rapidly in a good soil mix under frequent light fertilization and a constant supply of water.

Warm Season Vegetables

Vegetable	Minimum Container Size*	Minimum Direct Sunlight Per Day	Remarks
Beans	8" deep	full sun	- In a long box 12 inches wide, plant bush beans or trellis pole beans. - Beans have a high water requirement during blossoming. - Beans drop blossoms with dry soil or excessive wind.
Cantaloupes Muskmelons	5+ gallons/plant	full sun	- May be trellised to conserve space. - Compact varieties preferred for container gardening. - With male and female blossoms, may need hand pollination. - Needs good air circulation to minimize powdery mildew.
Cucumbers	8" deep 3+ gallons/plant	full sun	- Grow bush-types in hanging baskets or on a trellis (vines grow 18-24 inches long). - Grow strong vining-types on trellis. - Needs good air circulation to minimize powdery mildew. - Young plants are very sensitive to wind burn.
Eggplant	8" deep 4-5 gallons/plant	full sun	- One plant per container. - Needs night temperatures above 55°F for pollen development.
Peppers	8" deep 2-5 gallons/plants	full sun	- One plant per container or space to 14 to 18 inches in row. - Needs night temperatures above 55°F for pollen development. - Decorative, attractive plant with fruit.
Summer Squash (Zucchini)	36" by 36" space 8" deep 5 gallons/plant	full sun	- Compact varieties more suited to container gardening. - Great in a whiskey barrel size container. - One plant will produce six or more fruit per week. - Has male and female blossoms. May need hand pollination. - Needs good air circulation to minimize powdery mildew. - Keep fruit picked for continued production.
Tomatoes	12" deep 2-5 gallons/plant depending on variety (plant size)	full sun	- Varieties vary in mature plant size from determinate (bush) types to large, indeterminate vines over 6 feet tall. - Patio types (small vines) are great for container gardening and may be grown as hanging baskets or trellised. - Standard garden types require a larger container (like a .8(e)]o

Cool Season Vegetables

Minimum	Minimum Direct
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Vegetable	Minimum Container Size*	Minimum Direct Sunlight Per Day	Remarks
Onions (green)	6" deep	8 hours	- Onions require a consistent supply of water. Never allow soil to become dry.