

## OUTDOOR CONTAINER GARDENING

“Container gardening” is the term used for growing plants in containers outdoors. This type of recreation was initially promoted for people with limited outdoor space who still wanted to grow plants. As our society became more and more urban with increasing numbers of people living in apartments and condominiums with patios and decks, the interest in “container gardening” has flourished..

\*A brief history of the evolution in “container gardening” from medieval times to the present will be covered in this lecture.

### **Advantages of outdoor container gardening:**

#### Minimal space required

- Plants grown on a roof, balcony, patio, doorstep or even windowsill high above city pavement.

#### Maximum effect of plant color, form and height obtained

- Dull areas can be brightened up by various arrangements of container plants
- Unusual specimens that might be lost in flower beds can be highlighted
- Can serve as a hedge or barrier to indicate a pathway or to block a doorway or to hide or disguise an eyesore
- Mobility

#### Minimal labor in establishment and maintenance of plants

#### Easier control of plant growth

### **Disadvantages of outdoor container gardening:**

#### Water loss may be excessive

#### Requires greater attention to drainage than indoor plants

#### Special care, such as winter protection, may be required

### **Types of containers**

#### Traditional materials

- Clay - glazed or unglazed, plastic, metal, wood, concrete, ceramic, wire mesh etc.

### Nontraditional containers

- Cooped wine barrels, milk or bleach jugs, baskets, pieces of drainage pipe, cement or cinder blocks, washing tubs, crates, plastic pails, automobile tires, chimney flues, tool boxes, garbage cans, sinks, bathtubs, work shoes, coconut shells, driftwood etc.

### **Precautions in using certain containers:**

Should be of adequate depth for sufficient root extension

Wooden containers should well-constructed, and ideally made from rot resistant wood

Non rot-resistant wood should not be treated with creosote or (Penta) wood preservatives

Wooden containers should have air space beneath them to prevent contact from the wet ground

Cooped wine barrels' iron hoops often rust and fall apart

Concrete containers are often expensive, very heavy and sometimes do not provide drainage holes

Containers with toxic chemicals should be thoroughly cleaned and rinsed

### **Plant Selection**

- Annuals, biennials, herbaceous perennials, vines, bulbs, cacti and succulents, vegetables, herbs, roses, woody shrubs, ornamental trees, dwarf fruit trees etc.

### **General Cultural Requirements**

MEDIUM

WATERING

LIGHT

FERTILIZATION

DEADHEADING - Annual plants with long flowering periods will develop many more flowers if not allowed to spend their energy on producing fruit and seed. Removing flowers soon after they lose their ornamental appeal to prolong the flowering period is called “**deadheading**”.

## **WINTER CARE**

Brief discussion will be given to the USDA Plant Hardiness Map, a tool which if understood can help to protect plants against winter injury.

**In colder zones, protection is usually required to reduce a number of plant stresses, one of the most serious being "heaving" - the alternate freezing and thawing of soil that can literally lift a plant out of a container, exposing its root system to excessive cold and mechanical injury.**

Remedies to protect perennial container plants from winter damage:

- Insulate the container at the time of planting
- Set the entire container or the root ball in a hole dug in the garden and fill with soil
- Set the container on the ground and cover completely with material such as mulch (pine needles, hardwood or softwood bark etc.) or soil