

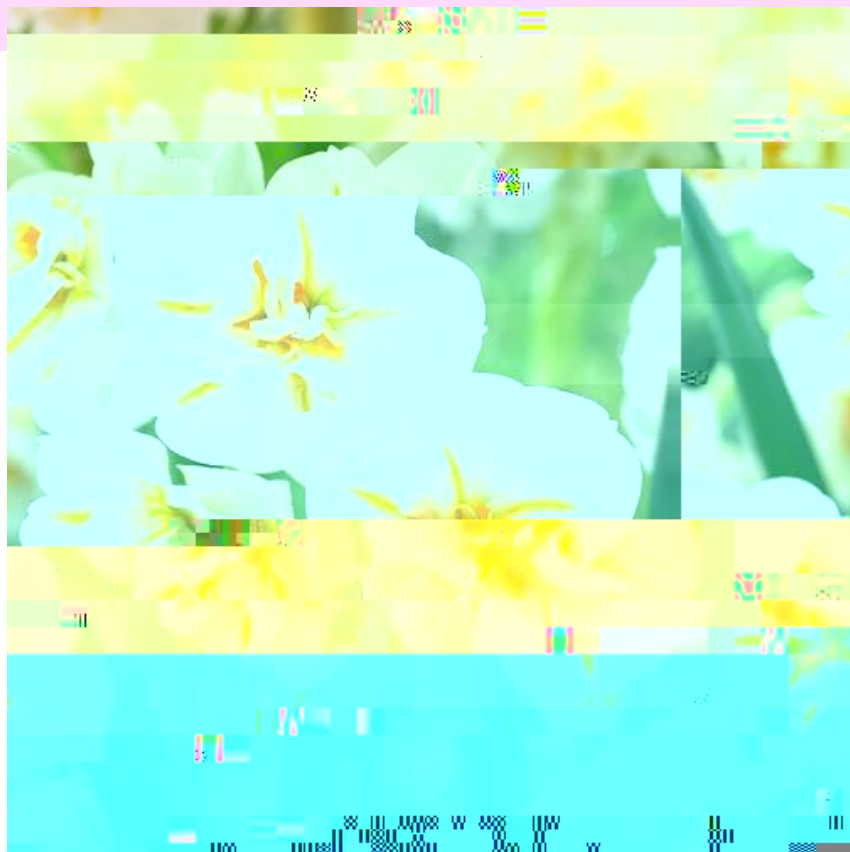
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXPERIENCE

A Note from Athens-Clarke County

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Hello readers!

Spring is upon us here in Athens-Clarke County! Bulbs are blooming and the garden is waking up to warmer weather. There are many opportunities in April for you to



Exploring Nature with Experts

Remember what it felt like to go on field trips - the excitement of getting out of your normal routine and entering some new world or experience? The Georgia Master Naturalist program, developed and administered through the UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources and UGA Cooperative Extension, was designed to give adults a way to engage with environmental education in a fun and interactive way. For those interested in learning more about the natural world around them, becoming a Master Naturalist offers a combination of hands-on activities, field trips and classroom instruction. The program explores habitats and ecosystems in Georgia as well as the issues affecting these habi-

Gardening in Containers

Revised by Bodie Pennisi

Extension Horticulturist

GARDENING IN CONTAINERS is a fascinating way of growing plants. It has expanded the horizons of gardening for homeowners and often has provided the only way to garden for apartment and condominium dwellers.

Planting in containers has also provided a contemporary aspect to gardening. The use of unusual plants in unusual pots and containers provides interest and color to surroundings that were once considered drab and stereotyped.

This form of gardening has been especially rewarding for those who have only a patio, deck or balcony on which to grow plants. Container plants provide the right touch needed for contrast and interest in these spaces. They are the accessories that make the scene comfortable and complete.

Flexibility and mobility are other important aspects of container gardening. You can display spring bulbs, summer annuals or fall blooming biennials almost immediately as they come into season. You can simply move seasonal plants in and out of the scene to add beauty to a treasured area.

Equipment and Materials

Growing plants in containers differs from growing plants in the ground. Field soils drain by capillary action, which pulls excess moisture downward. Soils in containers

have poorer drainage characteristics due to the shallow depth and reduced capillary pull. This is compensated for by providing a more porous planting mixture.

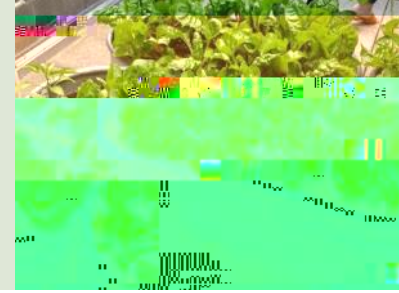
Poorly drained potting mixture can lead to root problems. Under conditions of excess moisture and poor aeration, roots become stressed and are easily invaded by root rotting fungi. Under these circumstances, plants fail to grow properly or even die.

Commercial Potting

Commercial potting rtu

Gardening in Containers

(Continued)



when choosing a container is whether it has adequate drainage holes. If you choose an attractive pot without provision for drainage, use a system of double potting. This requires that you pot the plant in a container that has drainage holes, and then place it on gravel inside the pot without drainage holes.

Container size is also important. Outdoor container plants, especially rapidly growing ones such as summer flowering annuals, need adequate space for root development. Small pots restrict root growth, which causes limited top growth. The end result is fewer flowers. While small 6-inch flower pots are often used, gardeners should think in terms of containers holding several gallons of potting mixture. These produce the most attractive plants and by far the most flowers. They also do not require such frequent watering.

Nursery containers offer potential for container gardening. They are easy to find, economical and come in a variety of sizes ranging from 2 to 15 gallons. Containers ranging in size from 3 to 7 gallons are commonly used.

Heavy fiber pots are quite acceptable. They are attractive, reasonably priced and will last an entire season if not placed directly on the soil. Termite damage is likely if fiber pots are in direct contact with the soil.

Repotting Techniques

Several planting techniques can be used advantageously to enhance the appearance of container plants. You can achieve a more finished appearance by using larger plants or by combining several large plants in a single container. For example, a 6- to 7-inch potted geranium already in bloom could be started in a 3-gallon container. Several 6- to 7-inch potted caladiums might be used initially in a half barrel. Or a 2-gallon potted hibiscus already in bloom could be transplanted in early spring or early summer to a 5- to 7-gallon container. This gives an immediate color effect.

Another approach might be to use 4-inch potted annual flowers initially. Several 4-inch plants already in bloom can be repotted into a larger container. Three or four plants are sufficient for a 5- to 7-gallon container. Some color is obtained immediately; however, after several weeks of growth, the colorful effect is more dynamic.

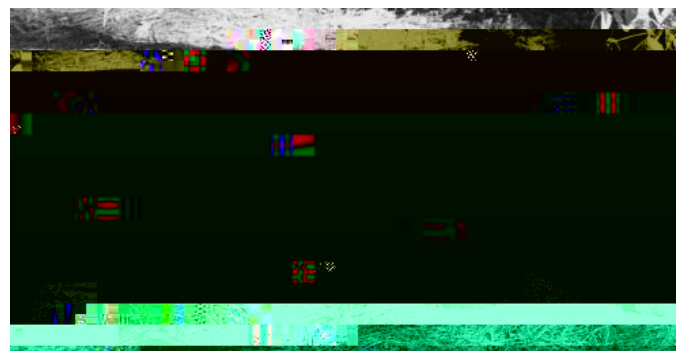


Figure 6. Nursery pots are ideally suited to container gardening.

Gardening in Containers

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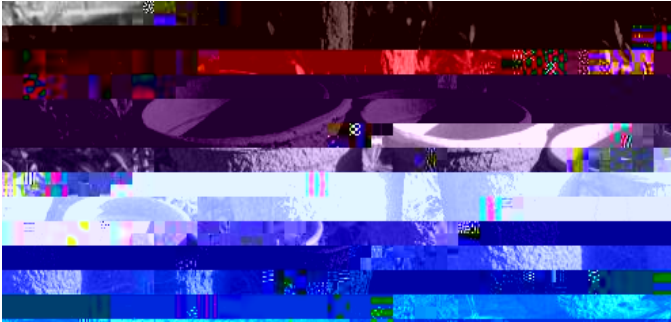
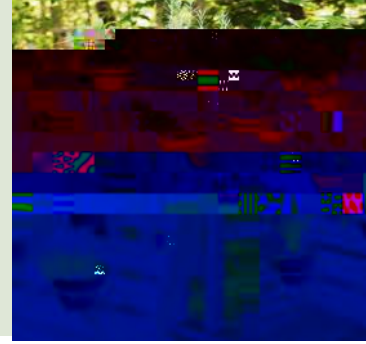


Figure 7. Substantial fiber pots are ideal for container plants.

Small and more economical flowering plants also can be used at first. You will need about a half dozen plants for a 5- to 7-gallon container. Plant these close to the edge of the pot with one plant in the middle. This procedure allows ample room for growth and air circulation. From four to six weeks of growth will be required to obtain a good effect.

When filling containers, do not pack the soil. Simply bump the container in the ground lightly to settle the soil. Fill the container to within 2 inches of the top of the container. This will leave sufficient room for water to thoroughly soak the soil. Before knocking out and planting individual plants, thoroughly wet the root mass. Plant individual plants so roots are set shallowly rather than deeply and gently firm soil around the roots. Finally, water the plants in thoroughly. This may require a couple of waterings in succession to wet the mixture entirely.

How to Fertilize Container Plants

You do not need to fertilize container plants the first two to three weeks after planting

if the potting mixture was amended with fertilizer. Nutritional levels usually drop after this period because plants use them and because nutrients are leached from the soil because of frequent watering.

Fertilization of annuals and perennials of a succulent or soft nature should start about two to three weeks after potting. The frequency of fertilization depends on the method you use.

For example, if you use a so-called liquid soluble fertilizer, make an application every two or three weeks during the growing season. If more rapid growth is desired, fertilize every one to two weeks.

Mix soluble fertilizer according to the label directions and apply as a normal watering. Apply enough of the solution so some drains out of the bottom of the container. If you use a dry, garden type fertilizer, apply it every three to four weeks. One-half teaspoonful of fertilizer per gallon of soil mixture spread evenly on the soil surface is adequate. Watering after applying the fertilizer dissolves the nutrients and carries them into the root zone. Watering the fertilizer in reduces chances of fertilizer damage to stems and roots.

Slow release fertilizers are popular. These are sold in the form of small, round pills. They release fertilizer gradually when wet. The type that lasts approximately three months is generally used. A teaspoonful per gallon of soil is usually recommended. Check the recommendations on the container because products differ and rates vary.

Figure 9. Dry, garden-type fertilizer can be used to fertilize container plants.

Fertilize containerized trees and shrubs of a woody nature as often as succulent plants. Woody plants should do nicely if fertilized in early spring (March) and again in May and

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Georgia Native Plant Society

ATHENS - EAST PIEDMONT CHAPTER

Winter Plant Sale

at Sunrise Nursery

531 Athens Rd. Waynesboro, GA 30389

9:00am - 12:00pm

2025

Local Farmers Markets



Helpful resources online:

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[Free Online Webinars](#)

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Handbook](#)

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Mission Statement

The UGA Athens-Clarke County Extension's mission is to respond to the people's needs and interest in Agriculture, the Environment, Families, and 4-