

# Vegetable Container Gardening - Beginners Guide

*Top Tips & Ideas for growing  
vegetables in containers and  
planters*

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# Table of Contents

## Contents

Chapter 1: Planting – Where Am I Coming From ?

Chapter 2: Time Rolls On

Chapter 3: Planter Types and Ideas

Chapter 4: Container Planting Top Tips

Chapter 5: Matching Planter to Plant

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# Chapter 1: Planting – Where Am I Coming From ?

*“no-one is born in a vacuum and we are all molded by the circumstances in which we find ourselves” anon*

I was born and brought up in the kind of family where money was always on the scarce side, and I was no stranger to making ends meet with whatever came to hand. Consequently although I may be accused of being on the mean side with the old cash flow, I would say in my defense that I was really just very careful with the somewhat limited funds at my command.

The benefit of being raised under these somewhat restricted circumstances, is simply that you are soaked deep down with the understanding that money is very hard to acquire, and painfully simple to throw away.

What does that have to do with vegetable container gardening you might ask ? Simple really; planting vegetables in containers can be a great way to get maximum value out of a limited space or resource, and if it is utilized properly you can even make junk turn you out a handsome profit.

Some people are put off the idea of growing their own vegetables because they do not have a garden, or a plot of land big enough to raise vegetables on. This is however a misapprehension, as the fact is that by following the right guidance you can provide a good supply of vegetables from a very limited space by utilizing the ideas in this manual.

As a child of about 11 years old, my father decided to move us lock, stock, and barrel to what amounted to a smallholding just a mile or so up the road from where we stayed in a rented council house. For us as kids it was a mixed blessing because on the upside we now stayed in a large house, with loads of garden space and some old out-buildings to play in.

However the downside was that from the get-go my father decided that we would learn his ways, from his childhood. This was not good news to us, as with this move he decided that we should ‘pull our weight’ and get to work on the farm.

Now you might think that with plenty of land available to plant in, we would have no need of growing vegetables in containers. However this was not the case as the fact is with a family of nine children to feed, every space has to be utilized to its best advantage, and every money-saving technique put into place. My parents were not wealthy, and so with good Scottish prudence put us to work around the smallholding.

Amongst the things I hope you will find interesting in this book, apart from tips on planting in containers; are things like how to renovate an old greenhouse on a tiny budget, how to grow vegetables in planters and raised garden beds as well as produce tomatoes, cucumbers and even grapes from an old grapevine!

Life “down on the farm” was not a barrel of laughs, it has to be said. There were times when my brothers and I would have done anything to get out playing football with our friends, or get away causing some mischief somewhere.

Instead however we were stuck on the farm, hoeing weeds out of the vegetable plots or mucking out pigs and horses. Not to mention chickens, geese, ducks, rabbits and all the other things associated with running a smallholding.

Not long after we moved into this smallholding, which was basically an old farm house with a couple of acres of land attached, my father decided that he was going to use a part of this ground to break up cars, as he was actually a car dealer by this point.

You probably think that I am wandering away from the point right about now ! However it is all relevant, as will become clear later on in the book.

We soon discovered that even scrap cars can have their uses around the vegetable garden – strange but true. They have their dangers also when young children are around, as we soon discovered to our cost – however that is another story !

General repairs around the place had to be done of course, and this was when it was really discovered that I was particularly good with my hands ( The brain was on vacation most of the time, so it was as well I was good at something!) Needless to say that rather than pay for experienced men to handle the tasks around the place, I was put into the “front line of defense” when a shed needed repaired or built.

As you can imagine on an old farm, there is always something needed repaired, so I was kept busy most of the time, much to my annoyance.

Yes of course mistakes were made – I was only 11 years old don't forget – but throughout this “school of hard knocks” experience, I learned a lot. How to grow vegetables in containers – I first of all had to learn how to build planting containers, on a very limited budget, as you may well imagine.



## Chapter 2: Time Rolls On

*“Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.” Carl Sandburg*

Yes, the years have moved on at an alarming rate, and now at 54 years of age I find myself writing this ebook, attempting to put some 43 years of knowledge into a few thousand words !

Most of it is thankfully irrelevant to this book, so at least you may be spared the ramblings and moaning’s that are the lot of most people (so I am told) of my age.

Getting back to the point of this exercise; growing vegetables in containers or planters, is not rocket science. No matter what some of the manuals tell you, growing or planting anything, let alone vegetables, just needs the will to do it and the right conditions to do it in, then the results will come naturally.

Granted, if you are intent on growing prize tomatoes, or huge award-winning marrows, then a certain expertise is involved.

Being best at anything does not usually happen by chance, but rather by real commitment and dedication to the task – no matter what it is.

During most my so-called childhood, along with the rest of my brothers, I was busy between school and the farm. The summer was a curse of sorts to us, because while our friends were ‘out and about’ we had to work in the lighter



evenings. At least during the darker winter evenings we could be out with our friends.

However, years later it turned out that I had in fact learned a few things about self-sufficiency. How to make the most of very little, and how to survive through tough economic times – like now.

Learning how to grow vegetables, was just a part of my upbringing. However it was a part that has an increasingly significant place in the world in which I find myself today; and one which I hope to share in this book.

## **Scrap Cars & Recycling**

I mentioned earlier, that even scrap cars have a role to play in the world of container gardening. Well the fact is that one of the most difficult parts of a car to re-cycle, are the tires. The steel wheels were always easy enough, as they are indeed scrap and so they were worth collecting and taking to the scrap merchants.

The tires though were another problem. Now however that problem can turn into an advantage, at least in a small part, because the tires can very easily be made into very good and productive planters, at zero cost to you.

Simply go down to your local car-breakers and most of the time they will gladly give you as many tires as you need, as they have to pay to get the tires taken away and disposed of.

When choosing your car tires however, be sure that they are all the same size, obvious I know – but it's very easy to

forget the obvious sometimes and be left with a problem you don't want.

The different kinds of containers that can be used for container planting, as well as the construction methods employed where needed; will be discussed in the next chapter, as will the soil or compost mix and numerous details that must be taken into account to get the most out of your container garden.



## **Chapter 3: Planter Types and Ideas**

*Necessity, who is the mother of invention. Plato*

Often times the best ideas simply come when you have to think “outside the box” usually because you just cannot afford to pay shop prices for what you want. Such is the

case for our first planter, discussed in the previous chapter – the tire planter.

This must be one of the simplest planters to construct as you are really just stacking tires one on top of the other.

As mentioned the tires should all be the same size, unless you want to have a tire that looks like it has a pot belly ! Normally there is no need to link them, as the weight of the soil itself will usually keep it all together.

However if you want to play it safe, all you need do is lay the tires one on top of the other until you have achieved your desired height. Then link them by boring through them with a drill or sharp awl, in three places. Tie them together with galvanized tie-wire or nylon string – job done.

The height of the planter depends on whether or not you need deep compost, this really depends on what you intend to grow.

A word of caution. Make sure that there is no contamination of the tires when you collect them from the breakers yard. Diesel in particular will kill your plants stone dead, ruin your entire day really!

## **Tire planter for Potatoes**

Tire planters make particularly good potato barrels. If you have not heard of this concept in potato growing, then it is simply this. Growing potatoes in a small area, is quite impossible using traditional methods, and this is where the potato barrel comes in.



By using your tires, start by placing three tires in the area where you plan to grow the potatoes, one on top of the other. (it cannot be moved later). **Do not link** these tires together, you will see later why.

Make sure you have some drainage at the base (broken clay post or gravel will do fine) then fill up to the height of the second tire, with a good compost material. Place your seed potatoes in place with shoots facing upwards (usually two or three seed potatoes will suffice) and cover over with a further 2-3 inches of soil or compost.

Place another tire on top, and wait for the shoots to break the surface by a further two or three inches. Put in more compost up to the top level of the shoots, with just a little breaking the surface.

Repeat this procedure, till the tires are about three feet tall, or starting to get unstable. When your crop is ready to

harvest, you can simply pull apart your planter, easily revealing the mature potatoes ready for harvest.



Now you see why we did not tie the tires together, it would be a bit of a nightmare to harvest the potatoes if we did, as the nature of the tires means the compost gets a good grip inside, being filled with potatoes. This can make it incredibly difficult to get them out of the planter.

Other planter types that suit the potato barrel model are, the **box wood planter** that can have the sides removed to reveal the crop when ready. Then there is the **simple plastic bag** method. This gets cut up the side to easily remove the potato harvest.

Then there is the **barrel method** where to harvest the crop you have to tip over the barrel completely to get the potatoes out.

The Raised Brick Potato planter as in the example below, is especially effective and easy to harvest if you lay the bricks dry like a dry-stone wall.

Just remove the bricks to reveal your potato crop when the time is right.



You can read all about the finished results of this particular experiment on my blog post at <http://planterspost.com/potato-planter-results/>

All of these planters follow the same idea as to raising the soil level as the potato grows. All very successful, and extremely satisfying when it comes to harvest time.

## **Traditional Timber Planters**

Timber vegetable planters are very easy to construct, and indeed can be reasonably inexpensive. One of the cheapest

ways is to go to the local sawmill if you have one, and as if they have any 'barks' available. These are the offcuts that are trimmed of the tree before it is cut into regular shaped planks.

I have built many things in the past for virtually nothing by using barks instead of expensive cut planks. Not just planters, but garden sheds can be built using this method.

Building with barks can look great, and really fit in with the surroundings a lot more naturally than finished timber can.

To be fair, there is some extra work sometimes, just squaring them of a bit. Depending on the load there can be a fair bit of waste also. However for the barks that are no use for construction, simply cut them to size for use in the log burner !

Building with sawn timber however does have it's advantages in that it lasts longer and is quicker to construct, just because the timber is all of a uniform size.



Timber planters come in all sizes, but the construction methods are basically the same. It is not rocket science, and is in effect four or six posts, with planks nailed up the sides to the desired height.

A basic timber planter for instance may be six feet long (1,500mm) by 18 inches (450mm) wide by one foot (250mm) high. It is advisable to re-enforce with an upright post ever three feet, and so this planter for instance would have 6 posts, one in each corner and one in the middle on each side.

The base of the planter is best made from plant friendly treated timber (**not creosote, which will kill the plants.**), about 1 inch (25mm) thick at least. This will ensure a good few years from the planter.



The base should be raised a couple of inches from the ground, and have a few holes bored for drainage also, other-wise your plants will become waterlogged, which is no good unless you are growing rice !

Top tip – do not use plywood or chipboard for your planter as it will just burst. Stick to sawn solid timber if you want it to last.

A vegetable planter of this kind is really another adaptation of a raised bed, with the only real difference being that a planter can be moved around (though it will be extraordinary heavy when full), and has a raised base built in. A raised bed garden is fixed in place as the posts are sunk into the ground, and the raised bed is generally a wider construction.

### **Using an old wheelbarrow ?**

Old wheelbarrows make excellent planters, especially if they still have a working wheel on them, as this enables you to follow the sun (or the shade), and makes for a truly mobile planter. A great advantage, if for instance the sun is only a short time in one area of your garden.

Be sure you punch a few holes in the base for drainage, as they easily get waterlogged. Painted up, a wheelbarrow can look good as well as “produce the goods” when it comes to growing vegetables or plants.



Another idea for a wheelbarrow, particularly if the base is rotten, is to prop it up on end against a wall, handles in the soil. With this you can now grow a climbing vine up the wheelbarrow, using it as a makeshift trellis. This can be really effective once the plant has taken hold.

If you do not have an old wheel barrow, then why not make a wooden one ? This can be particularly effective, and a real addition particularly to an ornamental garden, where the ascetics are important.

### **Traditional ornamental pots.**

If you want to grow vegetables on your patio are for instance, it is probable that you would like something a bit more “pleasing to the eye” than a re-cycled ten gallon paint tin, or maybe an old kiddies bath (both can make very effective planter).

This is the time where you might spend some cash and buy an ornamental plant pot for a patio. Be sure that it is glazed if it is liable to be left outside in the frost, otherwise it will burst the first winter unless you overwinter it inside.

One of the advantages of an unglazed ornamental pot is that you can age a new pot quite effectively by brushing it over with yogurt or just milk. This will encourage the growth of algae to give it an old look.

Pots can look particularly effective if you are growing climbers like peas or beans for instance. Simply make a pyramid shape out of three canes, sunk into the compost and tied at the top. This will produce a good harvest and look very effective on your patio.

A word of caution. Clay pots can dry out very quickly, so be aware of this and water accordingly.

## **Black plastic pail planters**

Ok, so a black plastic pail does not make for a very attractive planter, granted. However the black plastic has an added advantage that it absorbs the heat from the sun, which in turn transfers to the compost.

This makes for good growing conditions for the likes of marrows, cucumbers, chilies and a host of other vegetables that prefer a bit of warmth in the soil.



Again, be aware of the fact they tend to dry out quite quickly and so need fairly constant watering.

## **Hanging basket planters**

Most people think of hanging baskets only for flowers, however they can be very effective also for vegetables or fruit such as strawberries. The fact they are hanging up in the air means that the dreaded slugs won't get to munch away at your strawberries – a fruit which they seem particularly fond of !

Wire frame hanging baskets are very cheap to buy, and can last many years if taken inside over winter.

One tip for hanging baskets is to make the chains a little longer than usual (you can buy chain at most handyman stores), and plant beans or peas to climb up the chains. This

is a great system that will produce a good harvest very cheaply.

## **Planting in the gutter !**

Ok, this is perhaps more for raising seedlings than growing a mature crop. Nevertheless old guttering is great for raising young plants, because you can take them out of the guttering with a simple cut with your trowel. This means less disturbance for your young plants, which in turn means that they will transplant a lot more effectively, leading to a more successful crop.

There are a few things that you could grow to maturity in old guttering – lettuce for instance, or maybe a miniature herb garden ?

Guttering does tend to get waterlogged quickly when used outside, so best to run along the base and drill a few holes for drainage.

## **Timber window boxes**

These are constructed in very much the same way as the timber planters mentioned earlier, but are usually built to fit the particular windows. Be aware when building, that window sills tend to be sloped away from the house. This means that when you attach the wooden runners on the base to keep it clear of the sill, you put a corresponding slope on the runners so that the planter will sit level.

It may seem a small point, but it is simple to implement during construction, and means that you are not having to prop up the box with bits of slate to keep it level.

Since window boxes are meant to decorate the house, in most cases. A good option for planting here is the strawberry plant as they will not block out the sun from the interior of the house, and do produce a nice flower as well as great fruit of course.

Oh, did I mention – remember to water regularly as in all the examples before !

### **Use The Compost Bin!**

Ok, admittedly this does not look all that attractive, however the fact is that nutrient-greedy plants like zucchinis will thrive when planted on top of the compost bin – as is in the case below.



# Chapter 4: Container Planting Top Tips

*Gardening requires lots of water - most of it in the form of perspiration. ~Lou Erickson*

## **Compost for containers**

It is important when planting in a container that the conditions are just right, if you want to maximize your results.

Containers in particular, because of their very nature are more prone to leaving a plant root bound, if they have been planted to close together. Just in the same way that a pot-plant can get root-bound.

Other things to watch out for when planting in containers is watering, mentioned several times in this article already. It is nevertheless one of the easiest things to get wrong, and so suffer a poor harvest or worse – a dead one !

How to avoid over-watering as well as under-watering will be looked at in this chapter.

The compost in planters, is just slightly different as that when growing straight into your garden bed for instance. One of the main points to consider is not to use soil from the garden in a planter, as it tends to set hard in the planter.

Instead use a good mixture of compost and other material to keep the soil loose and aerated, more on this later.

## **What a plant needs**

First and fore-most a plant needs light to thrive, yes its true that some need more than others, but fundamentally vegetables in particular need plenty of light.

The leaves of the plant soak up the light, and are in fact the ‘engine room’ so to speak of the whole plant. The roots soak up the water, but the light is the real energy source that feeds the engine.

That said, this is one of the biggest advantages of container gardening. Simply that you can place your containers where the plant is getting the best light conditions available.

Bear in mind that “full sun” is considered to be around 6 or more hours per day. So all your calculations should be based around that figure.

Water conditions we have already explored, so no need to go into that further at this point. Just bear in mind that a plant will need different levels of water according to its needs, and the particular stage of growth. IE a tomato plant that if full of fruit will need more water than one that has yet to produce any. It’s not rocket science !

## **Feeding your plants**

When it comes to feeding your vegetable planters, then the debate goes on as to whether or not to go organic, and dump the chemical fertilizers altogether.

Personally on this issue, I use organic fertilizer whenever I can, but understand that not everyone has access or the time to feed their vegetables with organic fertilizer on a regular basis.



Feeding organically, with the use of well-rotted manure for instance, takes a bit more preparation than just throwing a handful of 'growmore' at your vegetables. However I believe the results are worth the effort.

Well prepared compost should include where possible, a mix of well-rotted manure or composted material from your kitchen for instance. Mix this through with your 'store bought' compost if you have none of your own. This will ensure that your vegetables get a good start.

If you are using your own compost from your composting bin, be sure to take the compost from the bottom of the pile. This is 'the good stuff' and should be crumbly and definitely not wet or smelly. This would indicate the compost was not ready for planting.

Basically what you are doing is adding a balanced diet of .N(Nitrogen), .P(Potassium) and .K (Phosphorus) – the key ingredients to a happy plant !

If you are using a chemical fertilizer then you should look out for this designation on the box, where N.P.K is usually marked according to the mix.

Nitrogen loving vegetables like cabbage or spinach for instance like a higher percentage of .N in the mix, whereas peas and beans get their nitrogen from the air and so do not need a strong nitrogen based formula.

Most marketers of chemical fertilizers nowadays have this marked on the box, even designating the vegetable types that the fertilizer is best for.

## **Filling your planters**

As mentioned earlier, the material used to fill the planters cannot include your garden soil, unless it is of exceptional quality and of a loamy nature. The reason being is that soil in a planter tends to go firm, and makes it difficult for the plant to thrive.

To begin with make sure that whatever planter you decide on, has holes in the base for drainage. Planters do tend to get waterlogged very easily if there is no drainage built in, leading to stem rot or worse.

To complete the drainage part you have to scatter some gravel or crushed stone about one or two inches deep along the bottom of the planter, old broken clay pots are ideal for this. This will simply prevent the drainage holes from getting clogged up and made ineffective as a result.

Next is of course to add your compost mix, hopefully you have made up your own quality compost with a good mixture of compost and well-rotted manure. This will add the needed nutrients and also help keep the compost 'loose' enabling maximum root growth.

Hanging baskets as well as unfired clay and wooden planters can easily get dried out, so the addition of 'pearlite' or other water-retaining products is advisable when making up the compost mix.

If you are planting in a hanging basket then of course the gravel or broken pot idea is redundant, simply line the basket cage with coconut fiber liner or whatever equivalent is available.

Next it is advisable to line with a black plastic liner to prevent the moisture escaping entirely. Poke two or three holes to allow some drainage.

If you are using the organic method versus growmore for instance, then mix your compost depending on the level that your vegetables require. Potatoes for instance like a good mix of manure, but peas on the other hand do not.

Depending on just what vegetables you plan to grow will by and large determine the kind of 'growing compost' mixture you should use to fill your planter. For instance root vegetables like carrots prefer a more sandy free-draining mixture.

## **Feeding**

Once you have your vegetables planted, then you must of course put in place a feeding regime if you are to get the best out of them. Because of the limited nature of the space involved in most planter's, feeding is highly recommended.

Mostly this is done with a liquid fertilizer during the stages of growth, perhaps with a light feed once per week or so, depending on the liquid feed used – refer to the manufacturer's instructions here if in doubt.

A slow feed granular mix can also be used, simply scatter lightly around the plant base and the watering in will do the rest. The main thing with the chemical feeds is not to over-do it, as this will do more harm than good.

## **Manure caution**

Just a word of caution, is perhaps needed here. Never use dog, pig or cat manure on the garden or in your compost heaps or bins.

Certain parasites like worm larvae tend to stay for a while in this type of manure, and so it should never be used for growing vegetables.

Also it is a wise move if you are bringing in manure to know what the source is, is it a pig farm for instance ?

For the record, sheep, cattle and horses make the best manure overall.

It goes without saying, that you should also keep pets out of the garden, especially cats – but you knew this already, right !

Finally, if you are spreading manure on the surface of the garden, then be sure that it is well rotted, and never spread around fruit like strawberries or vegetables like marrows and cucumbers as they will be laying amongst it, increasing any chance of contamination.

## *Compost Tea*

### Tea Recipes

Making a ‘quick brew’ of compost ‘tea’ is an efficient way to give your plants a quick boost, especially when they are at the fruit-bearing stage.

Here are a few recipes that you can try out – extracted from my book on [Square Foot Gardening](#).

**Compost Tea:** Place mature compost into a large drum, filling about half way. Fill to the top with water. Stir thoroughly then let this mix brew for a period of 5 days or so, then strain of the compost and add the liquid to the base of the plants.

**Horse Manure Tea:** Follow the recipe for the compost tea, but add only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> manure and two thirds water. I have found this feed particularly effective for Tomatoes.

**Comfrey Tea:** Rich in potash and nitrogen, Comfrey is worth growing in any patch of ground for this ability alone. Add a large bunch of chopped-up comfrey to your water bin, place a brick on top and fill with water. Let it brew for about two weeks before adding to your veggies.

**Nettle Tea:** This tea does not contain much in the way of phosphates, but has usable amounts of nitrogen, iron, and magnesium. After donning heavy gloves to avoid the stinging nettles! Choose young plants without seeds or roots and put a large clump into a pail. Chop up with sheers and  $\frac{3}{4}$  fill the pail with water . Stir thoroughly and leave to mature for 5-10 days.

### **Vermicompost Tea:**

If you have been using a vermicomposter with a tap to drain excess water, then this can be used as an excellent tea mix. It is however quite strong and so a mix of around 40-50 parts water to one part tea is usually sufficient for most plants.

With regard to these ‘teas’ a ladle or cup of tea once or twice per week is usually sufficient.

## **Mulching**

I am a keen advocate of mulching in general, for the reasons listed below.

1. Mulching keeps in the moisture content around the plant where it is most needed.
2. It suppresses weeds that would otherwise fight your plants for nutrients and water.
3. As the mulch rots it adds nutrients and humus into the soil, improving the soil condition and crop yield.
4. Though not really mulch – if you cover the soil with a weed suppressant fabric, this will also warm the soil slightly – good for early growth.

These attributes apply to vegetable growing in containers as well as in traditional vegetable beds.

Bark chippings are my favorite mulching material for my pathways between the vegetable beds, or indeed the planters I have around a particular area.

This is easy to walk on and prevents mud being spread around in the wetter weather, as well as acting as an excellent weed-suppressor.

For cucumbers, marrows etc I use just straw to mulch. This gives the vegetables a dry bed and discourages the dreaded slug.

That said, if you have a lawn that needs constant mowing (as they do) then a good idea is to use the lawn clippings as a mulch. Spread this about 2-3 inches thick between the veggies and allow to rot down to produce a nitrogen-rich feed for the plants.

For a more effective weed-suppressant, lay out some newspaper or cardboard before adding the lawn clippings.

However it has to be said that unlike planting in a garden or perhaps a raised bed; growing vegetables in planters usually means that there is not much space for mulching. However it is still worth-while, and perhaps more relevant when your planters are prone to dry out quickly.

## **Watering your planters**

OK, I guess everyone knows that plants need watering or they will simply die. But what exactly does water do to a plant ? Three main things actually, they are:

**Turgor, or rigidity. Water pressure within the stem of the plants creates Turgor so that a plant is able to stand.**

**Water enables the nutrients in the soil to energize the plant through the roots.**

**The process of photosynthesis means the plant uses light, carbon dioxide and water to make sugar.**

As mentioned, planters are indeed prone to either drying out to quickly, or getting waterlogged by over-watering. Whether by nature or nurture-so to speak. Water logging blocks the oxygen source to the roots of the plant, and so the plant dies unless remedial action is taken in time.

Fungal diseases also thrive in wet conditions, making this a “double whammy” for the poor plant.

How do you know if your plants are over-watered ? Well the tell-tale signs that a plant is getting too much water are:

**Leaves yellowing from the bottom up**

**Soil turning green**

**Grey mold appears on the plant**

**Plant has stopped growing**

**Plant is wilting badly**

Prevention of this is simple. Make sure that you have prepared your planter properly as per the earlier instructions. Do not be too enthusiastic when it comes to watering, but even if you are, proper drainage should allow for the soil to reach a natural level.

Be observant ! just watch your plants for the signs of overwatering, and be ready to remedy the situation. If there is indeed fungal growth, then you may have to apply a fungicide to remedy it.

**Signs of under watering include..**

**Dry, hard soil or compost**

**Plant leaves tend to go brown and crisp**

**Plant shrivels and dies !**

You will notice the list here is shorter ? Fact is that many more plants die from overwatering than the opposite, largely because the overwatering starves the roots of oxygen and so the plant reacts faster in many cases.





## Chapter 5: Matching Planter to Plant

*It's difficult to think anything but pleasant thoughts while eating a homegrown tomato.~ Lewis Grizzard*

### Planting Tips

Now that you have your planters all sorted out, you should be ready to get them planted out with the vegetables or fruit, flowers even of your choice.

This is quite a simple process, but requires some careful thought. For instance you must decide not only what you would **like** to grow in your planter, but also what can be grown with a reasonable expectation of success.

For instance if you live in Scotland, you should not expect to grow peppers or sweet corn in a planter, unless it was inside a greenhouse or cold frame.

Also, it should be obvious that potatoes will not produce a good crop if your planter is only a few inches deep !

With that in mind, here are a few suggestions for planting vegetables or fruit in the different kind of planters.

### Hanging baskets

Best suited for obvious reasons for short plants such as strawberries, however provided you have not placed the hanger too high, then you could consider using slightly longer chains as suggested earlier, and growing climbing strawberries or vegetables such as peas or beans up the chains.

A hanging basket can also be a good place to plant your lettuce as it is free from the predations of slugs and other ground insects.

Herbs as well grow vigorously in a hanging basket, which is just about the ideal size for a miniature herb garden.

## **Deep planters**

Deep planters such as the potato planter made from tires or indeed a wooden sided box, suit other things besides potatoes of course. Into this category would come your root vegetables such as carrots, parsnips or sweet potato perhaps.

Other root vegetables such as beetroot, turnip, radish, celeriac etc, can also be grown here of course but strictly speaking can just as easily be grown in a much shallower planter.

Even a decent sized plant-pot as long as it is over say 10 inches deep can be used to grow carrots quite successfully, especially if you raise it up of the ground away from the carrot fly, which tends not to fly over two feet high or so.

## **Shallow planters**

Anything under say 10 inches would be regarded as a shallow planter. However there is a good selection of vegetables that can be grown in these, the main problem is that the shallower the soil then the harder it is to keep the moisture content just right.

They are much more prone to getting water-logged or drying out very quickly. That said, even an ultra-shallow

planter such as the Gutter planter, can grow a selection of herbs for instance such as parsley, mustard, sweet basil, sage thyme etc, and can also be used to bring on seedlings as mentioned earlier.

## **Wheelbarrow's and other odd-bods**

Containers such as old wheelbarrows and other slightly more ungainly looking planters are ideal for growing climbing plants, such as peas or beans. Training them around the structure not only keeps the vegetable's well ventilated, but also makes something interesting and pleasant to look at.

A climbing strawberry plant such as the Mount Everest climbing strawberry can look quite spectacular, in this situation.

Your own imagination is perhaps the only limit on the kinds of plants you can grow, in the different planters available. Whether you are growing carrots in an old wellington boot, or potatoes in a child's discarded pram; the fact is that there is no end to the containers we can use to plant vegetables that will enhance our larder.

With the present move towards recycling and 'saving the planet' it is suddenly very much in fashion to do something that helps, instead of hinders our move to a safer cleaner environment.

As recycling has grown in popularity, so I am pleased to see is the idea of using material that would often be thrown into the rubbish tip, to produce great healthy vegetables straight from the garden with no "air miles" to count at all, and zero carbon footprint.

I sincerely hope that this work has been of some help to you, and has given you fresh ideas when it comes to planting your vegetables in containers of many kinds.

**Happy Planting!**

# Resources

Resources for this work are mainly my own experiences mixed with of course internet research.

My gardening blog site [www.planterspost.com](http://www.planterspost.com) has been the inspiration for much of the advice here, with many articles gleamed from gardening magazines and news from national and international sources.

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