

# Go big when planning container gardens



**Carla Keast**

## AROUND THE YARD

Planning a garden is lots of fun, but container planting is the time to really cut loose.

This is the one time when you can ignore the hardiness zone rating. All that matters is matching the plants' light requirements to the kind of light where you intend to put the pot. Put moisture lovers and drought lovers into different pots. And disregard the spacing recommendations. More plants in a container is, more. Jam that pot full of plants, one root ball almost against another.

Choose a container that strikes your fancy, as you'll have it for many years, and match the pot to the place. Clay pots that are exposed to full sun dry out very quickly and need daily watering. The soil in black coloured pots that are sitting in full sun can become very warm making for difficult growing conditions for many plants. A bright, busy pot will add some sparkle to a shady location.

Once you've got the container that you love, you're going to overfill it with plants and partially obscure it. Go figure.

Sometimes the container will offer inspiration, and picking plants is simply a matter of finding ones that support the theme. My oversized coffee cup and my love for coffee guided the planning of

cappuccino.

Another way of selecting plants is to follow the basic container recipe: one or two thrillers, a few fillers, and some spillers.

Thrillers are the tall dramatic backbone of the pot. Select the thriller first, and build the rest of the collection around it. Canna lily, purple fountain grass and bamboo all fit the bill.

Fillers fill space between the bottom one or two-thirds of the thriller and the top of the pot. Choose colours that complement, and textures that contrast with the thriller. Calibrachoa, petunia, euphorbia, and begonia are some common examples of this large group.

Spillers cascade down the side towards the ground and help anchor the pot. Bacopa, sweet potato vine, coleus, ivy, and any plant labelled trailing make for interesting spillers.

These plants are all annuals (in our prairie climate). But don't shy away from including the occasional perennial or shrub. Treat them as annuals, or come fall, transplant them to your garden.

The last thing to add, is the dead stuff



*Submitted photo*

**Bergenia is grown primarily for its puffy green leaves but it also features beautiful pink flowers.**

— brightly coloured branches, interesting seed pods, oversized wrought iron bugs, whimsical wisps of whatever, all add a final flourish.

When planning containers, go big. And have fun.

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