

# Containers Well-Suited To Late Season Gardening

**EBENSBURG (Cambria Co.)**  
— If the garden season escaped you, consider starting a container garden for the porch or patio.

Changes in growing media, soil amendments, fertilizers, containers and plant types have allowed just about everyone to enjoy garden-fresh vegetables. To get started, you will need containers, prepared soil mix, plants or seeds, water, light and fertilizer.

Any container large enough to hold a fully grown plant will be satisfactory. Appearance is important if the container is used in your living space. Root crops like radish and miniature tomato adapt well in a 10-inch pot or container.

Most larger crops such as pepper, eggplant or tomato will grow in 5-gallon plastic trash cans or half-bushel or bushel baskets that

are 12- to 18-inches deep. Adequate root space is important, and containers must have drain holes to allow excess water to move out of the growing medium and away from the roots.

Under no circumstance should you use garden soil for your growing medium. The weight and physical properties (slow drainage) of garden soil, as well as weed seeds and disease organisms, make it unsuitable for containers. Soil substitutes made from peat moss, vermiculite and fertilizer are ideal.

Prepared mixes are available from most garden centers and greenhouses. These mixes are free of pests and weeds, hold moisture and nutrients well and are lightweight.

To make your own growing

medium, mix one bushel of horticultural vermiculite and one bushel of shredded peat moss. Then, mix in one and one-quarter cups of fine-ground limestone (dolomitic limestone can also be used because it supplies magnesium), one-quarter cup of 45-percent superphosphate and one cup of a 5-10-5 fertilizer.

All vegetables need sunlight. Leafy vegetables like lettuce, cabbage or greens tolerate more shade than root crops like beets and radish. Fruiting plants like cucumber, tomato, pepper and eggplant need as much sun as possible. Consider putting wheels on the container so you can follow the sun.

You can probably still get some transplants at the garden center or greenhouse. They may also have some larger specimen plants

already in containers that can be used. Seeds can be sown directly into the growing medium. Use short-season crops or those that mature in the cool fall weather. When selecting seeds, check the packet to see if there are enough growing days left in the season. Since you are starting late, select seeds with the shortest possible growing season.

Follow about the same plant spacing in the container as you would with a ground planting. Don't be tempted to crowd plants in a container.

A container garden dries out much faster than an in-ground garden, so you may have to water some plants several times during warm weather. The growing medium should be kept uniformly moist. There is no specific watering schedule for you to follow.

Just water when the surface of the growing medium is dry.

Apply enough water so that a small amount comes through the drain holes. This will tell you that the total root system is moist and it will also help wash the mineral salts and fertilizer residue from the medium. This periodic leaching reduces the chance of soluble salt injury to the root system. Discard the drain water; don't let the "salty" solution be absorbed back into the medium in the container.

The initial lime and fertilizer incorporated into the medium will get the plants off to a good start. As plants grow, nutrients will be used and some will be lost in the drain water. Once the plants are established, maintain fertility with soluble fertilizer materials, applied according to package directions.

Kids of all ages will appreciate Vanilla-Maple Waffle Sundae: top mini toaster waffles with a tiny scoop of vanilla frozen yogurt and maple-flavored syrup. Enjoy!

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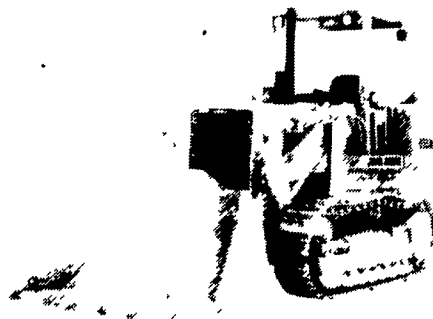


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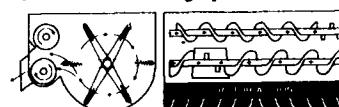
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