



Growing Flowers in Pots

Container gardens are an easy way to add a splash of color to your home landscaping. Pots are portable, decorative, and simple to maintain. They are a good way for novice gardeners to experiment with flowers or for experienced gardeners to accent existing flowerbeds. Follow these steps to create your own flower container garden and make your community a more colorful place.

Choose your container

In general, a bigger container is preferred. Greater soil volume supports better plant growth. Plus, it does not have to be watered as often, and there is less chance of the wind tipping it over. There are many container materials to choose from including clay, ceramic, plastic, fiberglass, and wood. Colorful, glazed ceramic pots serve a dual purpose, adding color from both container and flowers. You can also make containers out of everyday objects such as old watering cans. Be sure pots have drainage holes and think about portability. Will you be able to move or store it for the winter if needed?

Fertilize

Fill your container with a soilless potting mix made of materials such as peat, vermiculite, and perlite. Unless it comes with fertilizer already mixed in, add nutrients to the medium before planting. Because of limited growing space and frequent watering, container gardens should be fertilized frequently and in small amounts. Organic options include blood meal and bone meal for supplemental nitrogen and phosphorus. As the season goes on, you can liquid feed with substances such as fish emulsion or compost tea.

If you choose inorganic fertilizer, add a slow-release granular product with a nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium ratio of 3:1:2. One example might have a formulation of 18-6-12. Reapply halfway through the growing season. You may also choose a water-soluble fertilizer with a similar chemical makeup and apply frequently using a hose or watering can.

In general, fertilizers containing 8 to 20 percent nitrogen produce the most blooms. Avoid phosphorus-rich fertilizers. High levels of this nutrient are not needed, and runoff can contribute to water pollution. Annual flowers bloom on new growth. If there is no new growth, there are no new flowers, so fertilize frequently.

Decide what to plant

For maximum color and bloom, choose plants from the Prairie Star list. These are K-State research

recommended varieties of annuals that have demonstrated good growth and bloom in Kansas conditions with minimal care. For the complete list, visit www.prairiestarflowers.com or ask your local K-State Research and Extension agent for a copy.

Annuals provide more visual impact than perennials, which bloom for a relatively short period of time. For maximum color, plant seasonally with early spring plants such as pansies, followed by heat-tolerant Prairie Star annuals. In the fall, accent colorful blooming plants such as chrysanthemums or kale with pumpkins, gourds, or cornstalks. If your container tolerates freezing, fill it with greenery and decorations for winter.

Apply design principles

For visual effect, follow basic design principles when filling your container. Choose plants that satisfy three requirements: a tall focal point, filler material, and cascading leaves or blooms.

Decide on a color scheme. A harmonious design uses plants in varying shades of one color or similar colors. Or choose a bold contrasting color scheme with plants opposite on the color wheel, such as purple and yellow. Sample planting diagrams are included on page 2, but experiment to find other pleasing combinations.

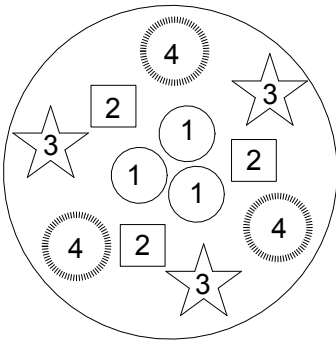
Choose your location

Many Prairie Star annuals need full sun, which means more frequent watering. Wind dries out containers faster. It might be worthwhile to set up a simple drip irrigation system from your outdoor spigot. Place emitters in your flower containers and set the system on a timer to ensure that plants get adequate water.

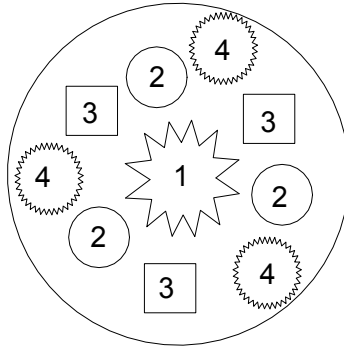
Monitor

Inspect containers occasionally for potential pests and diseases. Consult other K-State Research and Extension publications for recommendations on dealing with any problems that arise.

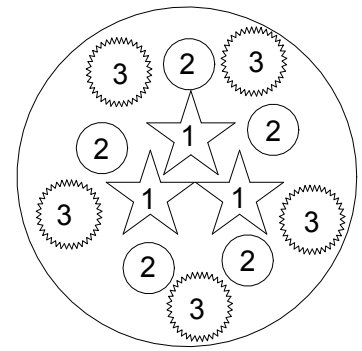
Sample Planting Diagrams for Flower Containers (24" Diameter)



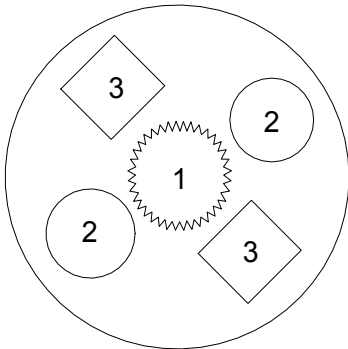
- 1 - Ornamental Pepper Black Pearl
- 2 - Angelonia Angelface Dark Violet
- 3 - Scaevola Whirlwind Blue
- 4 - Petunia Supertunia Bordeaux



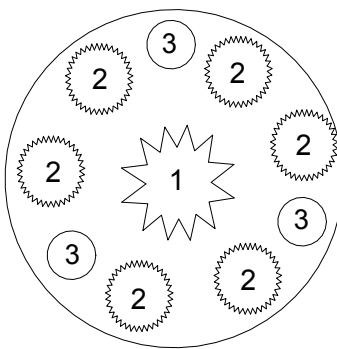
- 1 - Cyperus Papyrus Baby Tut
- 2 - Euphorbia Diamond Frost
- 3 - Geranium Caliente Rose
- 4 - Petunia Littletonia Sweet Purple



- 1 - Perilla Magilla Purple
- 2 - Zinnia Profusion White
- 3 - Petunia Supertunia Vista Fuchsia

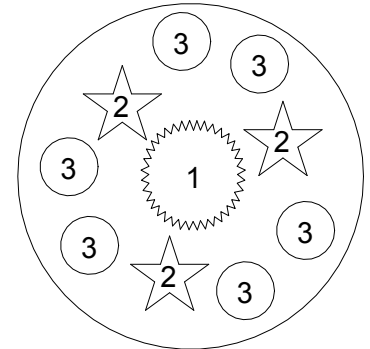


- 1 - Canna Tropicana
- 2 - Begonia Baby Wing White
- 3 - Sweet Potato Sidekick Lime

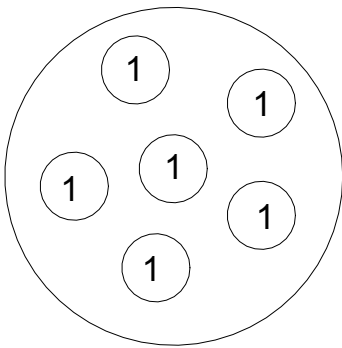


(For Shade)

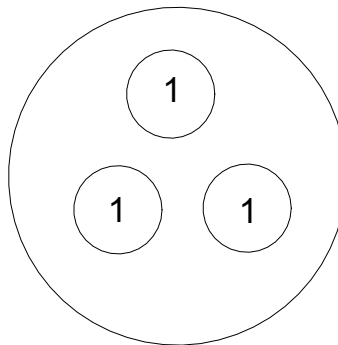
- 1 - Colocasia Coffee Cups
- 2 - New Guinea Impatiens Infinity Pink
- 3 - Dichondra Silver Falls



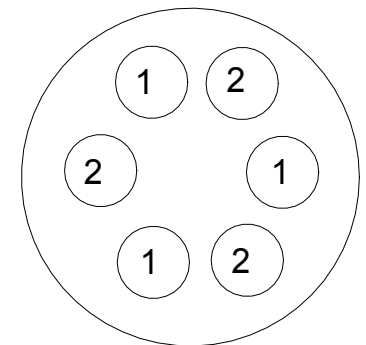
- 1 - Orn. Grass Pennisetum Rubrum
- 2 - Lantana Bandana Cherry
- 3 - Petunia Shockwave Purple



- 1 - Sedum Lemon Coral



- 1 - Petunia Supertunia Vista Bubblegum



- 1 - Geranium Rocky Mountain Dark Red
- 2 - Euphorbia Diamond Frost

Note: If you are unable to find a specific plant in the above examples, another variety of a similar color from the Prairie Star list would be an appropriate substitution.

Plants for Height		Light	Height (in)	Width (in)
Basil (Ocimum)	Pesto Perpetuo	sun or shade	32	18
Canna	Tropicana	sun	70	18
Celosia	Cramer's Amazon (Red)	sun	49	26
Celosia	Flamingo Feather Purple	sun	47	27
Celosia	Hi-Z (Purple)	sun	46	25
Cleome	Senorita Rosalita	sun	32	20
Colocasia	Coffee Cups	sun or shade	52	30
Cyperus Papyrus	Baby Tut	sun	32	36
Cyperus Papyrus	King Tut	sun	50	24
Hibiscus	Maple Sugar	sun	66	30
Ornamental Grass	Pennisetum Red Riding Hood	sun	38	30
Ornamental Grass	Pennisetum Rubrum	sun	48	36
Ornamental Millet	Jester	sun	52	24
Ornamental Millet	Purple Majesty	sun	48	28
Perilla	Magilla (Purple/Pink)	sun	30	20

Plants for Filler

Ageratum	Artist Blue	sun	12	14
Ageratum	High Tide Blue	sun	18	18
Angelonia	Serena (White)	sun	14	15
Begonia	Various Colors*	sun or shade	11	12
Celosia	Fresh Look Red	sun	18	13
Celosia	New Look Red	sun	19	13
Celosia	WATCH (Hot Pink)	sun	13	15
Coleus	Various Colors*	sun or shade	26	24
Euphorbia	Diamond Frost (White)	sun	14	18
Gaillardia	Plume Series (All Colors)	sun	16	15
Gaillardia	Torch Series (All Colors)	sun	17	15
Geranium	Various Colors*	sun	12	16
Geranium (Exotic)	Crystal Palace Gem	sun	14	20
Geranium Cascade/Ivy	Various Colors*	sun	11	20
Helenium	Dakota (Gold)	sun	12	16
Impatiens	Various Colors*	partial shade	17	13
Impatiens (Double Flowered)	Fiesta Series (All Colors)	partial shade	22	21
Impatiens (Double Flowered)	Rockapulco Series (All Colors)	partial shade	22	20
Impatiens (New Guinea)	Infinity Series (All Colors)	partial shade	14	17
Impatiens (New Guinea)	Java White Improved	partial shade	17	21
Impatiens (New Guinea)	Super Sonic Cherry Cream	shade	14	12
Lantana	Various Colors*	sun	24	36
Marigold	Various Colors*	sun	20	16
Melampodium	Various Colors*	sun	18	22
Ornamental Pepper	Black Pearl	sun	28	16

Plants for Filler (continued)		Light	Height (in)	Width (in)
Ornamental Pepper	Calico	sun	19	15
Ornamental Pepper	Chilly Chili (Red/Yellow)	sun	14	17
Ornamental Pepper	Explosive Ember	sun	15	16
Ornamental Pepper	Purple Flash	sun	24	18
Pentas	Northern Lights Lavender	sun	18	15
Plectranthus	Silver Shield	sun	20	19
Salvia farinacea	Various Colors*	sun	25	20
Scaevola	Various Colors*	sun	12	24
Snapdragon	Rocket Cherry	sun	28	10
Torenia	Catalina Blue	sun	10	18
Vinca (Catharanthus)	Various Colors*	sun	14	17
Zinnia	Crystal White	sun	15	24
Zinnia	Profusion Orange, Red, White	sun	16	22
Zinnia	Short Stuff Orange	sun	11	20
Zinnia	Star Orange	sun	17	24

Plants for Cascading

Nierembergia	Mont Blanc (White)	sun	5	16
Petunia	Various Colors*	sun	10	30
Portulaca	Fairytales Series (All Colors)	sun	11	23
Sedum	Lemon Coral	sun	5	20
Sweet Potato (Ipomoea)	Various Colors*	sun	10	48
Verbena	Various Colors*	sun	15	24

* For specific cultivar names and colors, refer to *Prairie Star Annual Flowers*, MF-2769.



<http://www.prairiestarflowers.com/>

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