



PERENNIALS IN CONTAINERS

Container gardens can add colour and interest to any area of your outdoor space ... you don't even need a garden. In order to make your attempt successful there are a few things to consider.

Although annuals are very colourful and long flowering they do have to be replaced every year. Perennials can offer the same colour and long-flowering as well as being long-lived. The perennials can be planted in the garden in the fall or with careful preparation remain in the pots over the winter for a new start next spring.

There is a vast array of containers available today that can fit any style and budget. Be sure whatever container you use has drain holes in the bottom. It is not recommended to add stone to the bottom of a container without drain holes (the water can not escape and the plants may rot). Place a saucer under your containers on decks or patios to catch unwanted drips. By placing some gravel in the saucer and setting the container on top aids in drainage.

If you are going to overwinter the plants in the container avoid using clay, since these can easily crack and break when the soil freezes. The containers should be at least 12 inches in diameter, and ideally over 16 inches, and at least 12 inches deep, for successful overwintering.

Since your plants are going to be in the same container for a long time it is important to prepare the soil properly. Ordinary garden soil is too heavy and poorly drained to use. Most commercial potting soils are too light and dry out quickly. The best is a mix of 75% soil-less potting mix and 25% weed-free commercial topsoil. Triple mix is a commercial soil containing coarse sand, soil, peat and compost, and this mix works well in containers.

It is essential that the containers be fertilized regularly with either a slow-release product or a soluble liquid fertilizer. Read and follow the label instructions.

Designing containers with perennials gives you an endless choice of flower and foliage colour, texture, blooming times and even some winter interest. It is wise to include a few annuals in the mix for extra colour.

First choose a perennial with long-season colour, such as Moonbeam Coreopsis. Next select a plant with attractive foliage colour, such as a Hosta. The third plant selection should have an interesting foliage texture with an attractive flower colour, such as a Sedum. The final plant selections are fillers, such as trailing ivy and annuals.

ROOTS & SHOOTS



If you plan to overwinter your perennials in the containers select hardy plants. According to the hardiness zone map Orillia is in Zone 5, so select plants which are rated hardy in Zones 1 through 3. A plant rated hardy in Zone 5 may not survive the winter in a container.

Overwinter your containers in an unheated shed or garage. Give your plants one last thorough watering and then forget them until early spring, when you return the containers to the outdoors. Remove any dead tops and water.

Some people are successful in overwintering containers by placing them in a sheltered, shady spot outdoors ... such as the north side of the house. Winter winds may dry out the soil, so it may be necessary to water during winter thaws. Throughout the winter keep piling snow on top of the containers for extra insulation.

Perennials That Like Container Life

Achillea – Yarrow

Astilbe

Campanula – Bellflower

Coreopsis

Dianthus

Echinacea - Coneflower

Heuchera – Coral Bell

Hosta

Lavandula – Lavender

Lillium

Hemerocallis – Daylily

Iris

Liatris

Perovskia – Russian Sage

Phlox

Rudbeckia

Salvia

Sedum

Thymus

Vinca

Ornamental Grasses