# Container Garden Care

It looks like spring has finally, officially, arrived. There does not look to be any threat of snow in the long-range forecast, so it is time to get those container gardens, patio pots, and hanging baskets going. Whether you purchase them or build your own, there are a few things you need to do to keep them looking good all summer long.

The first thing is to make sure your flowers are in the right location. Shade-loving flowers will not appreciate the hot afternoon sun, and sun-loving flowers will not perform well with less than 6 hours of sunlight a day. If you are putting together your own container gardens, make sure your plants all have the same light requirements.

Proper watering is also key to keeping your plants happy. The amount of water your plants need depends on several factors: how much sun they get, how big the container is, what the container is made of, and how large the plants are. The only sure way to tell if your plants need water is to stick your finger in the soil at least 2-3 inches and check it. If it is dry, water it, if it is still wet, then leave it be. Overwatering will kill a plant just as easily as underwatering. As the weather heats up and the plants get bigger, they will require more frequent watering. Some may even need to be watered twice a day.

Because the plants are in containers and cannot access nutrients that are found in the ground, they will need to be fed on a regular basis. A water-soluble fertilizer once a week will keep your plants happy and blooming. Plants need to be well-watered prior to fertilizing; this enables the roots to better absorb the nutrients. Always follow the recommended dosage on the fertilizer label; over-fertilizing can burn the plants.

Finally, set aside some time every week to dead-head spent blooms to encourage more blossoms. And if your flowers start to look a little straggly in the middle of the summer, trim them back a little to encourage them to send out new growth.

Spending just a few minutes a day taking care of your plants will ensure a full season of wonderful flowers!

McCord's
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