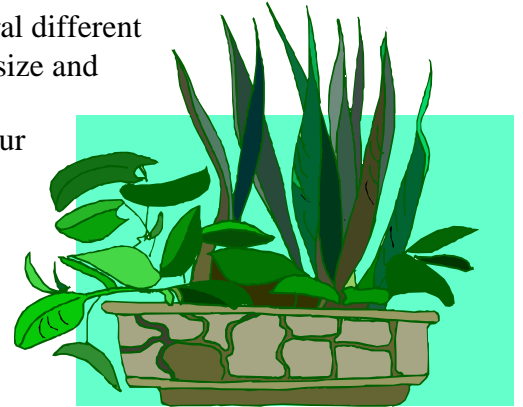


Dish Gardening & Windowsill Gardening

Dish Gardening. A dish garden is a pleasing arrangement of several different plants in a single container. The container can be of almost any shape or size and may be made of most any material. Dish gardens are especially valuable because they can be easily placed at various vantage points throughout your home. Some suggested locations might include tables, mantles, pedestals or windowsills.

The success or failure of your dish garden is largely dependent on the plants' ability to adapt to a wide range of conditions. Planting technique, type of container, soil mixture, watering and lighting are the most important considerations in assembling and caring for your dish garden.



Necessary materials for constructing a dish garden include:

α **Container.** The container may be round, square, oval, oblong or any other shape you desire. It may be made of any material from glass to clay pottery. If brass, copper or iron containers are used, they should always have some type of liner. Aluminum foil, a polyethylene bag or a plastic liner all suit this purpose very well.

The color of your container should be neutral and able to fit easily into the surroundings. Various shades of green, brown or yellow seem to work very well.

Take care to choose a container not less than 3 inches deep. Few containers provide drainage and most are too shallow for interesting plantings. The ideal container should be deep enough for a one-inch layer of gravel and charcoal beneath the soil, plus at least 2 to 3 inches of planting soil.

α **Soil.** Use a prepared potting soil or a mixture of one part sand or perlite, one part soil and one part peat moss. Add one level teaspoon of a 5-10-5 fertilizer for each six inch pot of soil added.

α **Drainage.** Use any coarse material such as gravel or broken flowerpots. Charcoal should be mixed in to provide oxygen.

α **Plants.** Three to six small plants, depending on container size, are usually sufficient to make a pleasing dish garden arrangement.

α Construction procedure.

- Select your container. Make sure it is at least 3 inches deep, but not more than 6 inches deep. Remember to line all metal containers.
- Add the necessary drainage material consisting of charcoal, gravel or crushed clay pots. There should be from ¾ to 1-inch of drainage material.
- Select and group plants according to similar growth requirements. For example, low light, high moisture plants in one container while high light, low moisture plants are grouped in another. This practice of grouping plants according to similar requirements is extremely important for a successful dish garden.

In considering plant groupings, you must also take into account the leaf textures, colors and growth habits of the various plants. A pleasing variety of the different types of plants should be one of your primary goals.

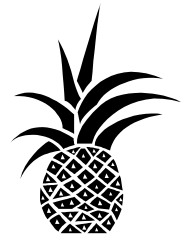
While contemplating your planting arrangement it is best to leave the plants in their containers. By doing this you will be able to try several different arrangements without injuring the plants. For a symmetrical planting, feature a tall plant in the center with shorter plants on either side. For an asymmetrical design, place the tallest plant off center, balanced by lower plants on the opposite side.

- Once you have decided on a pleasing arrangement, add from ½ to ¾-inch of soil on top of the gravel. Next, carefully remove the plants from their containers, arrange them in place and add soil. Do not set plants deeper than they were in their pots. Firm the soil around the plants and water thoroughly, but do not soak.
- Regular care of the dish garden will include regular watering according to requirements, thinning overgrown plants, and insect control.

Windowsill gardening. Indoor gardening can be fun for the entire family. A windowsill garden is not only entertaining to all, but will also teach your children about growing things and being responsible for taking care of them. Start with some easy, fun things that grow quickly. For example:

α Pineapple plant.

- Remove the top leafy portion of the pineapple by cutting out a 2-inch core.
- Remove all leaves from the base of the core to expose at least one inch of bare core.
- Plant the core in a small container of sandy soil and keep it moist. In about four weeks, the roots will sprout and the pineapple plant will need to be transplanted into a large pot filled with a commercial potting soil...



OR . . .

- Place the core in a container of water until it forms roots. To do this, insert 3 or 4 toothpicks into the sides to hold the core up. Always keep the water in the jar level with the top of the pineapple. When rooted, plant the new plant in a pot filled with a commercial potting soil and keep it moist.
- Place the plant in a sunny window and maintain it as you would the rest of your houseplants.

α **Orange or grapefruit trees.** Seeds removed from oranges and grapefruit can be soaked overnight in water and planted in a container of commercial potting soil. Keep the container well watered and in a sunny spot. Before your seeds have germinated and the young plants have begun to grow, try to maintain the following cultural requirements:



- **Soil.** All citrus trees prefer a loose, well drained soil of one part soil, one part sand and one part peat. The soil must be kept uniformly moist but never wet.
- **Light.** When indoors, place the plant in a window receiving full sun and good ventilation. When outdoors, place the plant in a partially shaded spot.
- **Temperature.** Citrus trees will tolerate fairly low night temperatures in winter...40 to 50 degrees F. at night and 50-60 degrees F. during the day.
- **Pruning.** Prune only in the spring if necessary. Cut out any long, straggly shoots encouraging a more dense plant.
- **Fertilizer.** Apply a complete fertilizer such as 23-19-17 (Rapid-gro) at the rate of one teaspoon per two quarts of water, applied every four weeks. Dry fertilizers may burn the roots and cause unsightly yellowing and browning of leaves.

α **Sweet potato vine.**

- Set the narrow end of a sweet potato in a glass of water (using toothpicks to keep it suspended) and put it in a dimly lighted place (closet or cellar) until it begins to sprout in approximately ten days.
- After it sprouts, put the plant in a sunny spot and water daily.
- When an abundant root system has formed, pot the plant in a good standard mixture of one part sand or perlite, one part garden loam and one part peat moss.
- Maintain as you would any other houseplant.

α **Avocado plant.**

- Remove the pit and allow it to dry for one or two days, then peel off the onion-like skin.
- Next, stick three or four toothpicks in the sides of the pit and suspend it over a glass of water. Just the bottom should be kept wet.
- Keep the glass in a bright but not sunny place, and in two or three weeks a thick root will push downward and as the pit splits, a sprout will push upward.
- When an abundant root system has formed, pot the plant in a good standard potting soil, one part sand, one part peat and one part soil.



Once you have rooted the pit and gotten a young avocado plant going, try to maintain the following cultural requirements:

- Give the plant as much light as possible. Avocados will grow best in full sunlight.
- The soil should be extremely well drained. The roots cannot stand long in water.
- Grow the plant indoors during frost producing periods of the year, and move out of doors on frost-free days. When moving the plant out of doors leave it in the pot, and simply bury the pot in the soil with the plant in the pot.
- Water deeply in dry weather.
- Prune only to control the size and shape of the plant.
- Spray with Malathion to control spider mites that are a fairly common problem on avocados.
- As far as fertilizer is concerned, fertilize with a liquid fertilizer once per month. Follow the dilution rates on the container.

Several other plants that can be easily grown with water and a little patience are:

- α **Onion flower.** Place toothpicks in a large onion and suspend it over a small glass of water with only the bottom of the onion in the water. Put it on a sunny windowsill and watch for an onion flower.

- α **Carrot plants.** Slice about one inch off the top of a carrot and place in a saucer containing enough water to cover the bottom of the carrot. Place it in a sunny window and watch the top grow into a tiny, green bush.

- α **Sprouting is FUN to WATCH.** Soak a few kernels of corn or lima beans overnight. Moisten a piece of cotton and put it onto the bottom of a glass. Place the kernels on top of the cotton (which must be kept moist). Watch for the sprouts!!!



Every effort has been made to provide correct, complete, and up-to-date pest management information for New York State. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly, and human errors are still possible. These recommendations are not a substitute for pesticide labeling. Read the label before applying any pesticide. Trade names used herein are for convenience only. No endorsement of products is intended, nor is criticism of unnamed products implied.

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