Dish gardens add visual interest both inside and outside

Gardeners who still want to get a little dirt under their fingernails during the winter months should consider dish gardening.

Dish gardens are a type of container garden, typically made with shallow, open dishes or bowls filled with multiple plants in one container. Gardeners can choose to use one type of plant in a dish garden or add visual interest by combining a variety of plants into one container.

A nice thing about dish gardens is they can be used indoors or outdoors. They’re a great option for those who live in apartments and don’t have a lot of outdoors space. Another advantage is these gardens are easily transported to a new location should a person move.

Dish gardens are more than just the plants that are in them. Get creative with the dish you choose. Sleek and modern, rustic or whatever fits your décor. Just make sure it has enough room for the plants and the potting media. Succulents won’t need as deep of a container as other plants because they can tolerate shallow rooting.

Also, drainage holes are a key factor. Gravel in the bottom of the container is not recommended as it may hinder water moving away from the plant roots resulting in soggy conditions.

Consider the material of the container, as well and whether the dish garden will be indoors or outside. Plastic gets brittle in the sun and outdoor clay pots need more frequent watering.

When it comes to plant selection, choose plants that are small and slow growing. It’s important for the success of the dish garden to choose plants with similar water and light requirements. Plants with similar growing conditions have the best chance at creating a visually pleasing and low-maintenance dish garden.

The media you choose in which to plant the garden will depend on the type of plants chosen. It should drain well, but also hold adequate moisture and not be very fertile. Fertile soil encourages rapid growth. Fast-draining media contains sand, perlite and other ingredients that expedite drainage to prevent cactus and other succulents from sitting in water too long.

When designing the dish garden, plants grouped in odd numbers often are perceived as more aesthetically pleasing. Consider arranging the plants similar to a floral arrangement with a taller plant in the middle surrounded by smaller, bushy plants. Gardeners can get really creative by adding hardscaping or figurines to portray fairy gardens, jungle environments or model parks. You’re limited only by your imagination.

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