Containers add a new dimension to the landscape

When it comes to gardening, there are more options available than the traditional garden bed. Planting flowers, small shrubs/trees and even edibles in containers can give the landscape a whole new look.

 Containers add a great deal of depth and texture to a landscape. They act as an invitation when placed near an entryway or lining a sidewalk. They also can enhance in-ground plantings and liven up areas of groundcover. They can create a dramatic effect when placed in a grouping. Groups of planters can provide a mass of plant material without having to work with very large, heavy pots.

 Gardening in containers may also be the only bit of soil available for those who live in condos or apartments, or who may be renting. The containers are fairly easy to transport in the event of a move.

 Another advantage of container gardening is it raises the activity above ground level. This is great for those with mobility issues and are unable to work at ground level.

 Most everyone is familiar with the traditional terracotta-style pot, but don’t be limited by that option. Think outside of the box when deciding on containers. Containers are available in all types of material, including plastic, ceramic, polystyrene foam, fabric, concrete and more. While considering the different options of container materials, get creative with the container itself. Don’t limit the possibilities only to traditional pots. There are so many things that can be used as containers.

 A child’s old dump truck bed filled with soil is a great choice to grow succulents. A pair of brightly colored rain boots can add whimsy to the landscape. Consider using a galvanized wash tub, an old bird bath or even a vintage claw-foot bathtub. Let your imagination run wild. If it can hold soil, it can be a planter.

 Planters can be used to cover up any flaws you may have in the yard. Think about things you may want to hide, such as a gas meter, a well head protruding from the ground or simply an awkward space with poor drainage where nothing grows. Containers can fix that problem quickly.

 Another advantage of containers is they can add a vertical element to what otherwise may be a flat planting. Containers can add height on a patio or by a fence. Grasses, small shrubs and upright plants such as canna are excellent choices.
It is important to use artificial or soilless media when creating container gardens. Topsoil or ordinary garden soil compacts too easily in containers and can limit the amount of water and air reaching the roots of the plants, causing them to die. Artificial media is specially designed for use in containers and won’t compact the way soil does. It’s also lighter than traditional soil, making it easier to rearrange the containers if necessary.

Be sure to purchase new media each year because over the course of the growing season, it loses its ability to hold moisture and nutrients and can potentially harbor diseases. At the end of the season, remove the media and clean the containers.

Don’t be afraid to mix a variety of plants in one container. Consider the “thriller, filler and spiller” method. The thriller is the main focal point of the plant. The spiller is a selection of plants that spill over the edge of the container. The filler is, well, exactly that – the plants that fill the space between the thriller and the spiller. This planting method provides a lot of visual interest.

Keep in mind that container gardens, especially those placed in sunny areas, will need more water than a traditional in-ground garden. Containers with flowering plants will benefit from regular deadheading.

Next time you encounter a problem area in the landscape or want to add color, turn to containers for an easy solution.

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