



Prince Edward County Master Gardeners

Thrillers, Spillers, Fillers Container Planting



Container gardening is a great way to have fun and experiment with unusual combinations. The formula of “Thrillers, Spillers and Fillers” works to bring it all together. The formula is self-explanatory: you want a big (or tall) exciting plant for your centrepiece or “thriller”. You need something to fill it in that will add colour, contrast and/or texture. Then, for that final touch, something on a different level that will trail down, or “spill” to complete the design.

Choose your pot to suit your style or your sense of humour. Keep in mind the location you want to place your container. It must have drainage holes or the possibility of creating them; if the holes are large enough for soil to fall through use a paper coffee filter in the bottom, which will let excess water through and leave the soil. It's important to use a good quality potting soil.



We all have colours we like, start with that. Be careful to choose plants that have similar requirements in terms of light and moisture. Most nurseries will be able to assist you in choosing appropriate plants for your container. Most people use annuals as they are less expensive and come in a wide array of colours and tend to bloom all season. Generally speaking, you'll need about 8-10 plants (depending on the size of your pot and the size of the plants). Keep in mind that one “thriller” is often enough to draw attention to your design. Choose plants with colours that either contrast well with each other, or have textures or shapes that compliment one another. The colour, shape and texture of the plants should enhance the design. Experiment with combinations while you're at the nursery – if it looks good to you, give it a try.

Finally, and this is important: the difference between a garden bed and a pot is that pots do not have the organic break down that occurs in soils so they do need to be fertilized regularly. We recommend applying a water-soluble fertilizer every week or every other week while watering your containers. Read the directions on your fertilizer package for specific application instructions. Containers also dry out a lot faster, so check them every day.

Container planting is infinitely forgiving – if you find during the season that some of the plants are not thriving, you can simply replace them with something else. There is so much pleasure in creating a container planting and if you keep it watered and fertilized, it will provide a beautiful focal point in your garden, seating area or balcony throughout the season.

If you have any questions, send us an email at: pecmastergardeners@gmail.com

or visit our website: pecmastergardeners.ca