

# **PLANTING A CONTAINER & READING A SEED PACKET**





# Planting a small container garden

**You don't need a garden space to grow plants!**

**Many different kinds of containers can be repurposed for growing from large to small.**



# Key things to think about when choosing a container:

- Size – match the *mature* size of the plant or plants you want to grow with the size of the container. Larger containers will require more soil but can grow more or larger plants.
- Water – easy access to water is important. Containers dry out faster than gardens in the ground and will need to be watered more (sometimes as often as once a day during hot weather).
- Drainage – plants need water but too much water is bad for plants. Make sure your container has holes in the bottom or another way to drain excess water.



# Steps to using your garden activity kit to plant a container garden.

In this example we are going to use the Healthy Harvest grocery bag as a container.



You will also need potting soil, scissors, plants or seeds, and a water source.



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First, check to make sure that your container drains water. Here we filled the bag with water, you can see that water drains out of the bottom of the bag.



Tip: If your container doesn't drain water, have an adult help you make holes in the bottom. You can use a small drill or a hammer and nail to poke holes.



Next, carefully cut open the bags of soil and pour the soil into your container. For this container we needed 24 quarts of soil.



Tip: For containers it is not a good idea to use garden soil as a planting medium. Potting mixes, like the one shown, are either soilless or contain pasteurized soil and added materials that help keep the soil aerated, provide nutrients, and allow for rapid drainage while holding moisture. See page 35 of the *Seed to Supper* book for more information about soil for containers.



Once your container is full of soil check to see if the potting soil needs to be watered before planting. It should feel moist to the touch. Potting soil that contains a lot of organic matter like peat moss or coir does a great job of holding water. However, once it dries out it takes time and a lot of water to rehydrate. If your soil is dry, gently water it with your watering can, or hose.

If you are planting transplant, like the basil to the right, you should make sure they are well watered before planting.





If you are planting a seedling or transplant into your container the next step is to remove the plant from its seedling container. To do this, carefully hold the plant by the stem, close to the soil. Gently pull the stem away from the container. You can also squeeze the outside of the container to help push the plant out. Do not pull the plant by the leaves as you may damage the plant.



Tip: If the plant is well grown it should easily come out of the transplant container with all of the roots and soil intact. Sometime the plant will still be small and the roots will not hold all of the soil together. Or it will have grown too much and the roots will start growing in circles inside the container.



If your transplant has roots growing in circles it is a good idea to gently break up the roots of the plant before planting into your container.





## Now it is time to plant!

Use your hands or your trowel to dig a hole just deep enough to fit your transplant. Place the transplant into the hole and pull the loose soil around the plant. Gently push the soil down around the plant. You want to make sure the roots of your plant are surrounded by the new soil with no large pockets of air. Don't push too hard, you don't want to compact the soil.





Now water your newly planted container.



Tip: When watering by hand, either with a watering can or a hose, water gently so the water falls on the container like a gentle rain.

Water until the soil stays “shiny” for 10 to 15 seconds after watering. This tells you that the water has soaked up as much water as it can hold.

In chapter 4 of the Seed to Supper book you can learn more about different ways to water your garden.





If you planted a small container it may be light enough to move to the best spot in your yard or porch for the plants to grow. You may need to ask an adult to help with this.

In this example basil loves full sun, so the container has been moved to a sunny location next to another larger container. Make sure to check your container everyday and water it if it starts to dry out. Check the soil moisture by sticking your fingers down 2 or 3 inches to feel if the soil is still moist.

We will check back next week to see how the plants are doing. If you plant a container send us pictures using the information on the website and we will feature them in our photo gallery.



# What if you want to plant seeds in your container?

Some plants do best if they are direct seeded into the location or container where they will grow to maturity. The seed packet has lots of important information about what the seeds and the plants need to grow. **Let's take a look at some seed packets to see what information is there.**

Chapter 3 of the Seed to Supper book has more information about planting your garden.



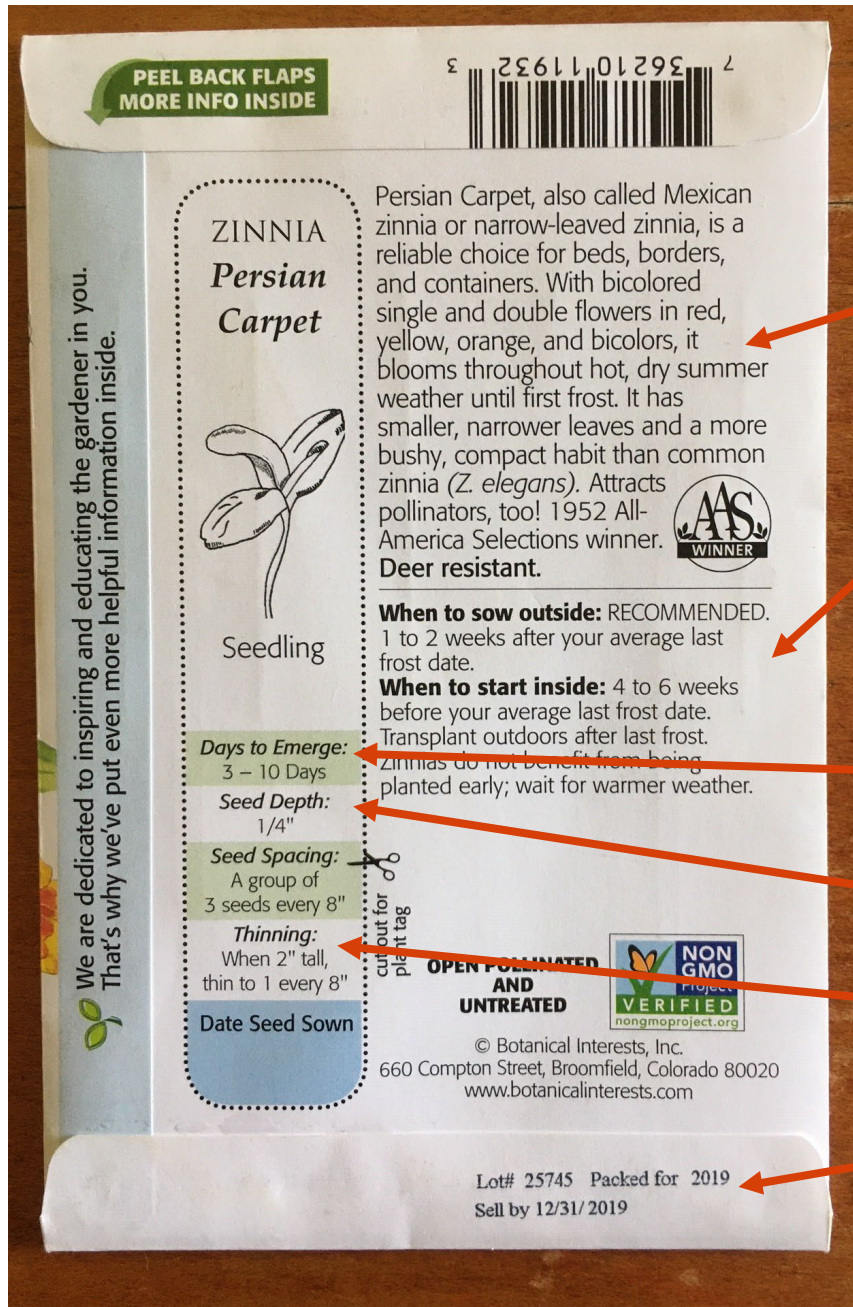




## Information that is usually on the front of the seed packet:

- How much seed is in the packet
- The general type of plant (the common name and sometimes the Latin name)
- The specific variety
- The days to maturity (this is how long it takes the plant to grow from seed to a mature plant, or from sowing to harvest)





## Information that is usually on the back:

- Information about the plant
- When to start your seeds, either outdoors or indoors
- How long it takes the seeds to germinate
- How deep to plant the seeds
- Distance between mature plants
- Year when seeds will germinate best