



# GREEN TIPS

Department of Horticulture - Michigan State University

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## Growing Annuals in Containers

Many gardeners grow annuals in a wide variety of containers, such as large flower pots, tubs, window boxes, hanging baskets or planters, or in specially constructed forms as a living fence, a vertical garden, or a bird or other animal. A few even grow them in a “tree,” a framework in the shape of a Christmas tree that holds many individual pots. A living fence can be constructed using two pieces of galvanized wire fencing placed 3 to 5 inches apart and lined with plastic. The space between the fence sections is filled with growing medium and trailing plants are inserted through the holes in the fence and plastic in to the growing medium. This extended planter is watered from above. Be sure to anchor the fence with stakes, or posts so that it doesn’t blow over. These stakes can be fastened to the inside of the fence before growing medium is added. If you want to grow annuals in a large, deep container such as an iron kettle, you do not have to fill the entire container with growing medium, especially if the container does not have drainage holes. Old containers such as pots, plastic milk cartons, and plant containers, plastic foam containers and pieces or similar materials can be placed upside-down in the bottom of a deep container and covered with a piece of plastic. The growing medium can be poured over this plastic. Plants are transplanted into this layer of growing medium. A layer of 6 to 12 inches deep should be satisfactory for most annuals. If a large container does not have a drainage hole, don’t use too much plastic foam. It contains air and is very buoyant and may raise the growing medium and plants out of the container.

Forms for vertical gardens, planters or animals can also be made out of galvanized fencing. Large forms should be hollow - there is no need to have a solid core of growing medium, which would be very heavy when wet. If you want to be able to move your containers around, be sure to select containers that are small enough to be moved easily, or select tubs or similar containers on casters.

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