



Bring the tropics outdoors!

Container gardening is becoming increasingly popular as consumers search out unique containers and plant combinations that reflect their own taste or style. Today the selection of pots and urns is dazzling, from the standard urn, cast iron, fiberglass or resin, to the unique shaped ceramic creations, in almost every imaginable colour. There are so many styles that reflect many tastes that there is sure to be one that is just right for that specific location.

As for plant selection, there are so many new and unique varieties, is it any wonder that the mind boggles. One style that is very popular is the tropical look with dramatic large leafy plants. Consider using Canna Lilies for the centerpiece, particularly the dark or variegated leaf varieties such as Tropicana or Stripped Wonder. Canna Lilies come with red, orange, yellow or pink flowers and do best in full sun.

For an even more exotic look, check out ornamental banana plants. 'Tandarra Red' (Ensete 'Tandarra Red') has huge waxy leaves of reddish purple tones over dark green leaves.

'Zebrina' (Musa Sumatrana 'Zebrina') is a spectacular cold tolerant variety with a red stem, narrow green and red mottled leaves on the top with solid maroon colouring underneath. In containers it will only reach 3-5 feet (90-150 cm) tall and does best in full sun or part shade.

'High Colour Mini' (Musa 'High Colour Mini') is a dwarf variety that only reaches 2.5-3.5 feet (76-106 cm) in height but has enormous exotic green foliage with large burgundy splotches. This tender perennial may even give you fruit! Does best in full sun or partial shade.

Begonias, in particular the varieties grown for their colourful foliage make excellent container plants in shady areas as well as a houseplant in the winter months.

‘Black Taffeta’ (Begonia ‘Black Taffeta’) is a new variety boasting huge black-purple leaves with burgundy underneath and pink flowers. It reaches 18-24 inches (45-60 cm).

‘Metallic Mist’ (Begonia ‘Metallic Mist’) is another new variety with maple leaf shaped foliage that is heavily silvered with deep purple veining making it a striking container plant. It reaches 15 inches (45 cm) in height, with pink flowers in the late summer months.

‘Phoe’s Cleo’ (Begonia ‘Phoes Cleo’) is another striking new variety with vivid chartreuse leaves splashed with mahogany-red.

Heucheras are another excellent foliage plant for part shade conditions with an amazing array of colours and shapes.

‘Lime Rickey’ has ruffled lime green foliage, ‘Obsidian’ has shiny purple-black leaves, and ‘Ginger Ale’ has gingery amber leaves while ‘Midnight Rose’ has hot pink splashed purplish-black leaves! These are just a sampling of the many to choose from.

Hostas are another excellent foliage perennial that does well in a container for shadier areas. They come in almost every size, ranging in colour from dark green, powder blue, chartreuse, to variegations of green and white, green and gold or blue and gold.

With these lovely foliage plants mix in with some of your favorite flowering annuals, which provide, colour, contrast and season long interest. For hot sunny locations choose Geraniums, Petunias, Marigolds, Verbena, Portulaca, or Osteospermum. For part shade consider New Guinea Impatiens or Begonias, both fibrous and tuberous. In full shade go with Impatiens or fibrous Begonias.

To finish off your creation add some trailing plants at the edges of the container to ramble through and spill over. Trailing Verbena, Calibrachoa, Bacopa and Sweet Potato Vine all do well in both full sun and part shade, while Torenia and ivy do well in part shade to shade.

To ensure that your containers thrive, use container soil mix, water regularly and fertilize every two weeks with a flowering plant fertilizer such as Plant Prod 15-30-15.

Now you're ready to get planting so come in and check out these and many other varieties to choose from. Enjoy!