



Story Ideas & Inserts

Container Gardening for porches, patios and decks

Container gardening allows you to invite the beauty of your home outside. Lounging around the poolside, enjoying a casual cookout by the grill, or candlelight cocktails out on the patio -- all indicate our love of the outdoors in the good ol' summertime! Americans' new found penchant for cozy homekeeping and simple entertaining has become an important lifestyle trend that is here to stay. This familial shift back to the hearth has prompted designers and home builders to tag the creative and recreation areas outside our back doors as "outdoor rooms."

Outdoor rooms are inspired by the same techniques that interior designers apply to create intimate spaces. The twist is that plants and flowers are employed to create the illusion of walls that define our outdoor activity areas. Top designers are building on this concept, and outdoor architectural plans now often include recommendations for placing garden containers in varying displays and heights to accent, enclose and divide outdoor living spaces.

Outdoor containers come in concrete, wood, clay, wrought iron, plastic and even fiberglass. Flower box planters and colorful pots create a unique combination to any gardener's collection. FLOWER FRAMERS™ *by Jay* makes a fiberglass flower box planter that's attractive, low maintenance and can water itself with their drip irrigation accessories. These stunning boxes become outdoor gardening vessels with their wide range of lengths and functions. You can have unlimited plantscaping options whether they're perched atop stone or masonry walls, or set at lower levels along decks, pool sides, patios or terrace areas. These design planters display beautifully in any setting. FLOWER FRAMERS™ also offers a full line of simple to use hardware, specially designed to support their product and enable secure mounting on flat top fences, wrought iron rails, and traditional deck and porch railings - all without the hassle of screws, bolts or other complicated hanging mechanisms.

Window Box Gardening

From the charming country villages and urban streetscapes of old world Europe, to America's graceful southern balconies and down-home porches of the heartland... window boxes have made their way back into the hearts and homes of gardening-lovers everywhere. In any setting, plants and flowers bring a timeless, wistful beauty to the areas they adorn.

With a variety of materials and styles on the market, adding window boxes to your home will be one of the smallest investments, by far, that you'll make in your home. Yet the impact of what this simple decorative accessory does for adding curb appeal and inviting warmth to your guest's first impression is immeasurable. One particular product on the market is a fiberglass window box made by FLOWER FRAMERS™ *by Jay*. They have labeled their product as "THE ULTIMATE WINDOW BOX" because of its nearly maintenance-free characteristics and the ability to water itself with their separate drip irrigation accessories. These boxes are classic styled to look like wood, but without the problems of traditional wood boxes such as rotting and time-consuming watering!

Imagine the sensory delight one gets when encountering a street scene embellished with lush, overflowing flower boxes. Recalling Europe's flower-framed rustic, country cottages and urban facades is where Jay Korte, President and founder of FLOWER FRAMERS™, was inspired to recreate his product for anyone who shares his love of window box gardening using practical design and application.

The result is a molded one-piece section of fiberglass, available in 2 to 15 foot lengths, that easily mounts on stainless steel brackets for easy planting and installation. The unique design of the box channels water to the sides and out through the drain holes in the end caps. And to further assist the drainage process, a specially designed 1" mesh filter pad is included to protect plant roots and prevent over watering. They can also be painted to match or accent your home's exterior color scheme.

Remember the GM advertising campaign for Oldsmobile - "It's not your father's Oldsmobile?" Well, FLOWER FRAMERS™ are not your mother's (or grandmother's) window boxes! And apart from the many other special features, the best yet, are the self-watering accessories. **Yes, these window boxes can water themselves!** No more lugging heavy sprinkling cans of water to second floor windows during the dry summer months. FLOWER FRAMERS™ boxes water themselves with a drip irrigation system that easily connects to any standard outside water source. Nylon tubing in a variety of colors, discretely connects all your boxes directly to the faucet. Simply set the timer to direct the frequency and duration of the drip watering cycles. The internal watering system is very convenient feature especially during the busy summer months. Travel and vacations pose no threat of neglect, because these boxes will continue to water themselves while you're gone allowing you to return to a welcome of lush, healthy, flowing flowers.

Urban Gardening

Urban living has been making a comeback in most major cities across the U.S. Contributing to this trend is the revitalization efforts of urban planners and developers as they try to counter balance suburban sprawl with the resurgence of interest in city life by homeowners drawn to the convenience, location and excitement of urban life. While many younger professionals naturally prefer an active urban lifestyle, empty nesters and mature adults are also moving their residences back into the city.

But leaving the suburbs doesn't mean you have to sacrifice your love of gardening. Container and rooftop gardening is the perfect solution for urban dwellers with a green thumb. Urban gardens can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose. A trellis attached to a balcony railing provides a gorgeous backdrop for a climbing flowering vine to take hold. In no time, you'll have a natural screen to enclose your urban balcony into a private sanctuary and outdoor entertaining space.

Outdoor containers options for your rooftop or urban garden come in a variety of materials: concrete, wood, clay, wrought iron and plastic. A very unique product on the market is a low maintenance fiberglass flower box made by FLOWER FRAMERS™ by Jay. They call their product "THE ULTIMATE WINDOW BOX," which owner Jay Korte states "was inspired by the charming window boxes that grace old-world windows and balconies in European cities and country sides alike." FLOWER FRAMERS™ flower boxes are versatile and can stand flat as planters along the edges of a patio, terrace, or balcony, or you can easily hang the box from your windows or balcony railings. They provide a variety of hardware that's simple to use and comes in many sizes. Their rail brackets are very convenient and install without screws or bolts.

Your FLOWER FRAMERS™ urban garden planter can also be painted to complement a plethora of outdoor themes: a Tuscan garden terrace, al fresco dining in Paris or a Mexican patio fiesta – the options abound! Try a faux finish on your window box to create a clay pot or marbled effect. For a Salsa-inspired box, glue ceramic tiles in vibrant cobalt blues, terracotta reds and sunny yellows and your box can instantly transform into a mini-chili pepper garden! Or for your Tuscan terrace, fill your faux finished planter with basil, oregano and Italian parsley for an instant herb garden.

Culinary Window Boxes

Any good chef will tell you that fresh herbs are best for infusing flavor and aroma into your culinary creations. Buying fresh herbs at the market is one option, but your picks may not always be in stock. If cooking is your passion, don't risk it! With a minimal amount of effort, you can plant your own culinary herbs right outside your kitchen window. Dried spices be gone!

A culinary window box is the perfect solution for those who love to cook but don't have a lot of time to plant or tend a large garden. Let the delicious fragrance of fresh basil, mint, rosemary, sage and oregano waft through your kitchen window while you're at the sink and lure you into your apron to whip up a few tasty dishes.

Fresh herbs are very easy to grow and by planting them in a small, contained space – like a FLOWER FRAMERS™ window box – the maintenance is very manageable for even the busiest garden or culinary enthusiast. FLOWER FRAMERS™ boxes are a molded one-piece section of fiberglass that easily mounts on stainless steel brackets for easy planting and installation.

FLOWER FRAMERS™ on-staff Horticulture Specialist, Shauna Lindsey, recommends using their 2 or 3 foot box in a sunny location for growing sun-loving herbs such as oregano, savory, fennel, basil, purple sage, coriander, garlic, chervil or French tarragon. While most herbs prefer full sun, there are many others that prefer a cooler environment. Shauna states that lemon balm, sorrel, chives, parsley and a variety of mints (black peppermint, silver mint and curly spearmint) look and taste their best planted in partial shade. Plant lemon balm and two types of the mint along the back of the window box. Plant the third variety of mint, the sorrel and the chives along the front. Finally, plant the parsley in the center of the box.

Whatever herbs you decide to grow, the reward is the wonderful flavor fresh herbs will add to your favorite dishes. Additional gardening recipes for herbs or flowers can be found on the FLOWER FRAMERS™ Web site at www.flowerframers.com. Click on their "Gardening Recipes" page and get your shovel ready!

About our hardware -- FLOWER FRAMERS™ offers one-piece stainless steel brackets in ¾", 1", 1¼", 1½", 1¾", 2" and 3" width sizes for fence and rail mounting. FLOWER FRAMERS™ also offers easy to use installation hardware suitable for hanging the boxes under windows.

Window Boxes: Pocket size gardens in unexpected places

A simple and colorful way to add a touch of charm and a hint of your personality is planting window boxes or container gardens. These compact planting send a signal of warm welcome as well as bring a touch of Europe to your surroundings. Your designs can be bold, whimsical, flamboyant or a creation of old-world grace. The window box is your floral masterpiece to create.

Any time of the year is perfect to plant a box brimming with flowers or greenery on a windowsill as the arrangements can be changed with the seasons. During the fall and winter, strands of lights can be added as an additional feature.

And don't be boxed in by thinking that only windows can hold these little gardens. Line the pool or patio areas. Take them to work. Window boxes add the same appealing look to any building exterior – from a small storefront or café to country clubs and hospitals.

The first planning steps involve determining the type of box to use. Window boxes come in many materials. Traditional wooden boxes are made from cedar and cypress to withstand wet weather. Pine can be used, but waterproofing is necessary to a longer life. Many mail order garden suppliers offer sturdy fiberglass boxes as well as those made from cast aluminum. Heavy duty planters known as English hayracks add a quaint look. Plastic containers provide lightweight mobility. If there are no drainage holes, you'll need to drill several in the bottom. Newer designs and technology have created fiberglass window boxes that need very little maintenance and provide built-in drainage without the rot associated with traditional wooden boxes.

The size of the box is next to decide and should be determined by where you want to place it. Setting them on platforms or flat surfaces won't need hanging hardware. But if you're hanging it under windows without shutters, they should not be shorter than the width of the window. They should measure the same size as the window width or wider. For windows with shutters, it's recommended to measure from the middle point of your left shutter to the middle of your right shutter to look visually balanced. Supporting the weight of your window box is also very important. Be sure to select secure solid steel brackets, screws or anchors for attaching them to your houses, or use strong wire for deck railings and fences.

Next on the list is soil. Use a highly quality peat-base soil mix available at most garden centers. Regular potting soils are too light to sustain the plants. An easy soil recipe for containers is one part topsoil, one part peat moss, one part bark chips and a small amount of potting soil that contains vermiculite and perlite. Water-retentive crystals aid in holding moisture, while minimizing watering and are available at garden centers or mail-order garden suppliers. To keep soil from escaping through drain holes, an inch or two of gravel or some type drainage material should be placed in the bottom before adding the soil.

Now you're ready to create your window box masterpiece. Generally taller flowers are planted in the back of the box, short ones in the front and mounding plants in the center. If you want

that cascading or waterfall effect, use ivies or other trailing plants such as Vinca Vine or Sweet Potato Vine in the front. Be sparing with the sweet potato vine – it can take over your box! Other planting suggestions include: crowding the plants for a showy look – plant closer than you would in the garden. Experimenting with color schemes and using unusual textures or shapes will be pleasing to the eye.

Maintenance of your box is simple – water, pinch off spent blooms, fertilize every two weeks and water by touch – not sight. Window box soils tend to dry quickly, but over watering can cause rot. Test the soil first with your finger and only water if it's dry.

Then it's time to enjoy! You'll find that you, and others, will pause to savor the simple beauty spilling from your window box creations. Your home's entryway will enlighten the senses of you and your guests.