



Creating Beautiful Containers

I came across a great container article in Fine Gardening a few years ago called 'Thrillers, Fillers & Spillers' -- a title that serves as a simple recipe for eye-catching containers. First, choose a 'centerpiece' plant to build your design around a plant that is either structural (tall and stately), has unique or colorful foliage or a flower that is dramatic or long-lasting. Next, add a few 'fillers', foliage or flower plants that complement the main plant in color or texture. These secondary plants add mass to the container. Finally, add a plant or two that will 'spill' over the sides of the container. Perennial or annual vines are a good choice and should echo or contrast the other plants. This is the basic container recipe, and as long as you use each type of plant - thriller, filler and spiller - and balance the use of color and texture throughout, you too can create a beautiful container.

General Tips:

1. Plant in combinations of 3, 5 or 7 varieties depending on the size of your container
2. Combine plants with different characteristics -- height, long-lasting flower, bushy filler, attractive foliage, cascading habit, coarse or smooth texture
3. Select plants for appropriate sun/shade conditions
4. Water daily (twice a day in hot, windy weather)
5. Gently pull apart the root ball (or cut in several places with sheers) when planting to encourage growth
6. Pinch back regularly, especially at the beginning, to promote dense growth and shape habit
7. Dead-head regularly (take off spent flowers)
8. Fertilize with a slow release organic fertilizer

If you want assistance with your summer or winter containers, please give MODE Landscape Design a call at 773-519-6491. Reprinted from MODE Landscape Design Vol 2: Beautiful Containers